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No. 5

A PUBLICATION FOR THE HOME

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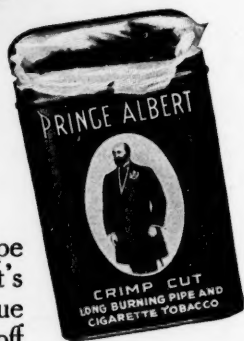
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Monthly Publication Issued by SMITH PUBLISHING HOUSE, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City.
 ORMOND G. SMITH, President, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City; GEORGE C. SMITH, Secretary and Treasurer,
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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

VOLUME 16

FEBRUARY, 1913

NUMBER 5

Timothy Peacocke's Wife

By Fannie Heaslip Lea

Author of "Jaconetta," "Quicksands," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBT. A. GRAEF

CHAPTER I.

THE last night out there was no moon. The girl in the bow, lifting her happy face to the ghostly fingers of the trade wind, the clear, star-pricked darkness, and the occasional sting of the spray, yet sensed a lack. She forced it into words.

"I'm not satisfied—there ought to be a moon."

"Moons," said the man beside her, his smile half lost in the dark, "don't go by favor."

"No," she conceded, "I suppose not." Then her laughter bubbled deliciously. "But when I'm happy I want the stage setting quite perfect—don't you?"

"Any stage setting," he suggested slowly, "would be quite perfect—if you were happy—eh?"

"H'm'm——" said the girl, considering. She sighed, and laughed again.

"Good wine," he reminded her, "needs no bush—ergo—happiness, no moon. Besides, isn't there something in the dark—something big, and mysterious, and strong—that takes you out of yourself—unties your hands, so to speak?"

"I'm afraid of the dark," she objected, grimacing faintly. "I'm afraid of the dark, and of spiders—and cows—and drunken men."

"Wide range," said her companion.

The girl swayed against the rail and

was silent. The wind blew her white skirts backward, molding the fabric upon her slender limbs. She wore a misty scarf, and this, too, yielded to the air, its ends streaming from her shoulders like the wings of some delicate Victory. Her face showed a blur in the dark, but her voice, somewhat deeper than the common, was impetuously soft, and her small hands moved when she spoke with a swift, eager grace.

"Miss Clay," said the man at length.

"Mr. Peacocke," she answered at once, with a fictitious and alluring gravity.

"Do you realize that to-morrow morning at half past seven we get into Honolulu?"

"Yes," she said, "I realize it." She shut both hands tight upon the rail, and in the dark a flame of crimson swept her smiling face. "Why?" she asked, in a sort of breathless lightness. "Don't you? Or did you think I wouldn't?"

He hung fire a moment, frowning to himself. His were deep-seeing, clean, blue eyes, though the hair, pushed back beneath his cap, was black as an Indian's, and no Indian ever walked with a more feline lift and swing.

"Oh, yes," he said, "I do—to my cost. Time slips away from you, doesn't it? I'd like to be six days back—beginning this trip again."

She cried out in horrified denial.

"Oh-h! I shouldn't. It's been long enough, as it is——"

"You've been bored?"

"Not that."

"You are so anxious to get to Honolulu?"

"Yes," she admitted softly, "I am—
anxious to get to Honolulu."

Peacocke nodded, in the dark.

"You're rather melancholy to-night," she rallied him delicately. "Tired?—Or cross?"

"Neither," he said slowly. "I'm thinking——"

"And I interfere with the process? Do forgive——"

"Please!" he interrupted swiftly. "Don't go!"

She stayed her mock departure gracefully.

"There's something," he added, unsmiling, "I want to say to you."

"Dear me! It sounds important."

His gravity broke a little, whimsically.

"I hope you'll think so—when you've heard it."

"Tell me—and see."

There was so little prescience in her tone, in her soft, friendly laugh, that Peacocke stopped an inconsiderable moment, biting his lips and frowning. Ultimately he yielded to the tidal wave within him.

"I want you to marry me."

He said it quite coolly, though the hand that he thrust into his trousers pocket shook and turned cold. With something the effect of an afterthought, he added, the words grimly colorless, "I love you."

"Oh, don't!" begged Janet, with a sharp, pitiful softness. "Please! Please!"

She leaned toward him impulsively, laying one small and gentle hand upon his arm that quivered to feel its weight.

"I'm sorry—I'm terribly sorry—I never even dreamed——"

Peacocke did not touch the ministering hand, but his voice grew slightly husky.

"Still," he said, "now that it's suggested to you—eh?"

"I am so sorry," said Janet again, more softly still—"so sorry."

"Some one else?" he hazarded grimly.

"I am going to Honolulu to marry him," said Janet reluctantly.

She lifted one hand to her cheek, pressing a ring of sapphires and pearls, neither conspicuously good, into the tender flesh.

"I wish you had told me," he commented quietly.

"Was there any reason," she reminded him, "for me to suppose it would interest you?" Her hand slipped from his arm with a regretful kindness.

"Will you tell me now?" he asked, almost as if she had not spoken. "I should like to hear—and we have been so much together the last six days. Six days may be a lifetime on shipboard."

"Are you sure you care to hear?" Janet objected. Nevertheless, she told him, shifting her position a little as she talked, so that the wind came full in her face, and swept the hair away from her eyes.

"We've been engaged for four years," she said, with an exquisite shyness. "We—became engaged a week before he left the States. He's on a plantation on one of the islands—Maui—and he couldn't very well come back for me—so I'm going out to him. Doesn't it seem queer?"

"Rather queer," said Peacocke.

She hesitated a moment before a certain complexity of inflections in his voice, but an impelling desire to be utterly frank with him drove her on.

"After all," she mused, "you've been so uncommonly nice to me—should you really like to hear it all? I think I should like to tell you. If it won't hurt—you can't be quite so serious as you think—after only six days—it must be just a fancy——"

"If you please," said Peacocke coolly. "And don't worry about me. It's no fancy—but I can stand the gaff."

She lifted her face, on a sudden impulse, to the great salt sweetness of the night and the rushing water.

"It is queer," she insisted, "driving on into nothing, like this—out of the dark, and into the dark. Four years—"

that's been the dark. Letters are nothing. You'd rather hear the voice you want, even if it only said 'See-the-cat!-Can-the-cat-run?'—wouldn't you?"

"Undoubtedly," said Peacocke.

"I should," she murmured. "Oh, I should! I've gotten so sick of letters." She sighed, leaning her elbows on the rail and staring down into the phosphorescent spray. Out of the corners of her eyes she watched him rather timidly. "Well—I stayed at home and waited—and the evening and the morning were the first day. Then the evening and the morning were a great many other days. Christmas came and went four times. So did spring, summer, autumn, and winter. I'm twenty-five now. I was twenty-one when he left the States—though, of course, you could have done that sum in your head, couldn't you?"

"I fancy I could," said Peacocke.

"It's better to do a sum in your head," she told him wistfully, "than to do it in your heart. That's apt to hurt a bit—still— Then, two months ago, he wrote and asked me if I'd come out and marry him—since he couldn't by any possibility come in—and I said I would. So I got together some clothes—and I came."

"What did your people think of it?" asked Peacocke, a shade of hope in his tone.

Janet laughed.

"I haven't any," she averred defiantly. "Except a stepmother, who is very much worse than nothing at all. So I had nothing to leave—and everything to come for." She hesitated imperceptibly. "Oh, I should have loved it, of course, if he could have come back for me. Any girl wants to be come for. But he couldn't. You see? He simply couldn't. So I put my pride in my pocket—with my purse and a clean handkerchief—and did as he wanted. I've no idea I shall be sorry."

The man beside her winced and frowned again at the singing happiness in the light words.

"I hope not," he said, with controlled calmness, and added: "You haven't told me his name."

"Gillespie," said Janet. "Carter Gillespie. It's a pretty name, isn't it? Do you know him—by any remote chance?"

"I don't remember—" said Peacocke slowly. "I seem to have heard the name. Maui, you said?"

She nodded.

"Maui— Do you think I shall like it?"

"If you care for the country—possibly."

"Under the circumstances," she offered, half mocking, but with an undercurrent of feeling, "one's supposed to like almost any place—isn't one?"

"So I have heard," said Peacocke.

"Then I dare say I shall," said Janet.

She hummed a little tune, a bit of bravado that faltered presently and fell away into silence, out of the midst of which she struck the flat of one hand suddenly and imperatively upon the rail.

"Say something!" she cried, with a nervous gayety. "Do, please, say something! Say you hope I'll be very, very happy—or say you think I'm silly—anything—only say something!"

"There is nothing I want to say," said Peacocke, "but what I have said before."

Janet looked at him swiftly. Her soft compunction quickened to a heat of protest.

"But I've told you—it isn't nice of you, now—"

"I'm sorry," said the man in his turn, "but it can't be helped. I'm apt to be rather permanent in my emotions. I shouldn't have spoken if I'd known—of course. Still, having spoken—it stands. I can't take it back. I say again I want you to marry me."

For a long time there was no answer. Once Janet began to speak, and set her lips tight upon a breathless sound. Once she threw herself back against the rail and stared into Peacocke's shadowed face. Ultimately she flung out one hand and emptied it of nothing.

"How can you?" she cried reproachfully. "Oh, how can you! And I like you so much!"

"There you are," said Peacocke evenly. "Perhaps that's the answer."

"And I have just told you—"

"That," he interrupted quickly, "is unfortunate, I admit—"

"Oh, I don't see how you can—" said the girl. She was trembling with emotion, swiftly aroused. "It isn't nice of you. It isn't fair. It looks as though you thought I were"—she choked and stammered—"as though you thought I were—easy. It's unbearable—how can you misunderstand me so?" In an instant's flaring anger she turned away from him to the lights and security of the distant promenade deck. "I am going back," she said unsteadily. "Please do not trouble to come with me."

Peacocke laid his hand on her arm—very quietly—and she stayed.

"It is you," he said, "who are not fair to me. Be good enough to hear me out—at least. I spoke in ignorance of your engagement, but once having spoken, the truth remains. It's no disrespect for me to say I love you, since it's true. I can say it cleanly to any woman, so long as she is not actually married to another man. Under those same circumstances, I can just as decently ask her to marry me."

"Ten minutes after she has told you," the girl interposed hotly, "that another man means everything—everything in the whole wide world to her—yes?"

Peacocke looked into the dark, cleft with a symbolic relentlessness by the bow of the ship, and his lips twitched to a smile. "It's a big world," he said, "and no one human being in it means everything to any other human being—believe me. I don't say you don't love him. As a matter of fact, I'm afraid you do. But I'll take a fighting chance to get you away from him. I know I'm just a steamer acquaintance now, but I could make you love me—in time. Also, I could make you happy. Also—I could take good care of you—and I doubt very much if he can do that."

"How dare you?" she flung at him angrily.

"If you were going to marry me," Peacocke continued, with a steady cer-

tainty, "you would not be coming out to me. I should be going back for you. I'm not saying good women haven't done it before, nor that the men haven't been worth it, but a man would have to be pretty big to be worth that—from you."

Without a word, Janet disdained him—yet she stayed, held by some secret force.

He went on imperturbably:

"Further—you haven't seen him in four years. That's a long time. The man you'd marry at twenty-one you'd thank God for taking out of your way at twenty-five. You've got a capacity for idealization, and you've trimmed him up—until I very much doubt if he'd recognize himself at first sight. You admit he left the States when you'd been engaged only a week—he's a pen-and-ink lover—"

"Do you wish to insult me?" she questioned, dangerously calm.

"You cannot possibly suppose I do," he retorted with equal control. But he did not stop. "Your life has been acutely different from his— You told me you'd been in New York the greater part of the last four years—that you studied music there. I know New York. I know the loneliness it breeds. From living in a two-by-four room on the fifth floor, and eating three times a day with geniuses and school-teachers, you might very well come to build a shrine for a lover across seas and burn candles before it. There's nothing like art to give you an appetite for life. Dine at a sufficient number of restaurants, and in time you'll yearn for corned beef and cabbage. Am I right or not?" His tone changed, dropped deep and rounded, keyed to illimitable passion. "I told you I loved you," he said; "I've asked you to marry me—"

But Janet would not let him finish.

"Do you suppose," she said breathlessly, "that if I were *mad* about you—I'd listen to you? Do you think I haven't any loyalty—nor constancy—nor decency? Even if I didn't care for the man I'm going to marry—and I do—I do!—don't you suppose I'd stick to

him? You must be blind! Don't you suppose I know what honor means?"

Peacocke turned on his heel and laid a courteously guiding hand upon her arm. "Honor," he said dryly, "has been known to ride at windmills. I'm afraid I've got my own code. Suppose we go back. I fancy you'd rather—now that we've had it out."

Janet felt the tumult of passionate resentment flicker and sink within her before the man's unyielding strength. The clear, warm sky, with its metallic tracery of stars, the steady wind, and the chill, fine whisper of spray in the air went on eternally the same. She drew a long, unsteady breath, and walked with him slowly across the deck.

At the door of the saloon he left her. All around them was the chatter of the last night out, and from a dark corner of the deck came the tinkling music of ukeleles and guitars, accompanying a boyish tenor.

"*Aloha oe!*" Peacocke interpreted. "At least you'll let me say that in the morning before we land?" His smile was all at once endearingly frank, his blue eyes direct and compelling.

"I ought to be very angry with you," she answered, softening against her will. "I'm not sure that I'm not."

She went down to her cabin and opened her steamer trunk. From the top tray looked up at her the smooth, soft-lipped face of the man she had come out to marry.



"What's wrong?" he said huskily.

She kissed the picture before she began to pack.

CHAPTER II.

At six o'clock the next morning, Janet was out and pacing the deck in a restless ecstasy of excitement. She had not slept well—a recurrent memory of Peacocke's words had fought for room with her anticipations in the small hours—but loss of sleep had only deepened a very little the shadows around her great, dark eyes, and the flush of intense emotion painted her cheeks and lips. Her mouth curved quiveringly when she smiled. She was very near beauty, and yet escaped it definitely. The white linen frock she wore set

itself to the lines of a figure as slim as a wood nymph's, and she had tied a narrow band of black velvet around her bright-brown hair to save it from the wind. The absolute lack of color in her garments only intensified the vividness of lips and eyes.

All about her on the deck was hurry and confusion. She watched it with a heart in sympathy. People were constantly coming up like rabbits from their hutches, disappearing, and coming up with hats and coats in readiness. A crowd of college boys gathered by the rail, exchanging addresses and rough-handed pleasantries.

Janet was smiling at their gay banter when Peacocke came out of the saloon and crossed the deck to her at once.

"Oh, here you are!" he said; "wrong side of the ship. Don't you want to see Diamond Head? I've been looking for you everywhere."

He had changed his gray flannels of the night before for blue serge with a dark-red four-in-hand, and Janet noticed, with the little thrill of pleasure that she always felt in a personable man, that the red accentuated the sunburned cleanness of his skin.

"I've seen Diamond Head," she said, making a little face at him. "I'm disappointed in it. It merely looks as if some giant had lost a tooth out here in the middle of the Pacific. Doesn't it now?"

"You're a Philistine," he reproached her mockingly. He leaned one elbow upon the rail and thrust the other hand into his trousers pocket, in a frequent attitude of negligence. "Also, you're a Goth and a Vandal. Listen: 'No alien land in all the world has any deep, strong charm for me but that one—'"

"I know," she interrupted ruthlessly; "that was Mark Twain—it doesn't prove anything, however."

The curt voice went on with a certain drawing music in its lowered tones:

"No other land could so longingly and beseechingly haunt me, sleeping and waking, through half a lifetime, as that one has done. Other things leave me,

but it abides; other things change, but it remains the same—"

"Does it?" said Janet, suddenly and wistfully, "with you?"

He nodded. "I always come back to it."

She looked away from him, away from the ship, to the far horizon line, her eyes misting with happiness.

"I think," she hesitated, "that it will be like that with me, too."

Then she grew recklessly gay.

"How do I look this morning? Will I do? Am I sufficiently impressive? I had three minds to put on a fussier frock—one ought to be married in frills, I suppose?"

"Shall you go straight from the boat to the church?" asked Peacocke quietly. The red faded a little beneath his tan.

"I fancy so," said Janet. Deliberately, she ignored whatever had been between them the night before. "He'll meet me at the dock—yes—I fancy we will—go straight to the church."

"Will you ask me to your wedding?" he suggested.

In spite of herself, her eyes rose, startled, to meet his look. There was nothing in its restrained friendliness to alarm her pulses.

"If you wish to come," said Janet, "I shall be very glad."

"I very much wish to come," he answered, still with the same even commonplace, and that was the end of that.

A moment later she shook off a feeling of awkwardness.

"It's getting a bit late—I think I'll run down and put my hat on—"

"Just a minute," said Peacocke, "and we'll have a look at a paper first." He took one from a man crossing the deck and handed it to her with an impersonal smile.

"A Honolulu paper!" cried Janet delightedly. She laughed outright. "Why, when—"

He explained.

"They always send them out to meet the ship."

She opened it eagerly, at the first page, scanning the headlines.

"That's progress for you! Why, it's quite a decent sheet—just like any other

paper—doesn't it make Hawaii seem real? Up to now, I've been feeling as if it were half a dream—so far away from everything—but this! Here's the weather report—Mexico in the Throes of Revolution!—'Disastrous Fire at Coney Island'—fancy that! 'Pacific Mail Liner Ashore at Yokohama'—glad it isn't us—aren't you? 'Shocking Automobile Accident—Joy Riders Meet Death'—so, even in Honolulu there are joy riders, aren't there? Isn't it dreadful? What is a hula girl?"

On the last careless question, before he could take his eyes from her eager face, or answer her, the breath caught, gasping, in her throat, and cheeks and lips faded ashen white.

He cried out, startled:

"Are you ill?"

She did not answer, only stared blankly and unwinkingly at the printed page, so that he laid a hand upon her arm and shook her almost violently. The horror frozen in her face unsteadyed his fingers.

"What's wrong?" he said huskily.

When she still did not answer, although one corner of her mouth twitched painfully, as if she tried, he took the paper from her unresisting hand.

From an upper left-hand corner, glaring, black headlines impressed themselves upon his brain, and, beneath them, he read swiftly:

One of the most shocking automobile accidents in the history of Honolulu took place last night when a machine driven by Peter Crowley, of this place, and containing, besides Mr. Crowley, two hula girls and Carter Gillespie, of Maui, was overturned in one of the curves about Diamond Head, and Crowley was killed. It is thought that the steering gear—

His glance cast hurriedly farther down.

The machine at the time of the accident was exceeding—Gillespie escaped with a gash on the left temple and a number of contusions—It is thought—

Unconsciously, Peacocke crumpled the paper between strongly tightening fingers.

"He wasn't badly hurt," he said gently.

Janet lifted dark eyes set in a colorless face, wiped blank of any expression but horror.

"What," she asked slowly, with little, careful pauses between the words, "is a hula girl?"

And to that there was finally no answer but the truth.

At first, Peacocke evaded, for her sake.

"A lucky escape," he said, trying with all the force of his own control, speaking through voice and look, to steady her quivering nerves. "I don't know anything nastier than a defect in the steering gear. A few bruises—"

"Will you tell me, please," she said again, "what is a hula girl?" She did not take her eyes from his face.

"Read the whole thing," he urged. "There may be extenuating circumstances—you can't judge—"

But Janet parroted numbly:

"I read enough. What is a hula girl?"

"The hula," said Peacocke, "is an Hawaiian dance."

"Not—nice?"

He admitted perforce: "Not nice."

"I see," she said; her lips were painfully dry.

"Hula girls, then—"

He nodded unwillingly. The length of the deck was practically deserted. On the other side, people crowded against the rail, and chattered, and laughed. Echoes of laughter came faintly when the wind freshened. In the isolation of the spot, Peacocke laid his fingers warmly over hers.

"Don't!" he said, with an immense compassion for her suffering. "Don't take it like that! The night before his wedding—a good many men you know, like to celebrate—It's almost customary—"

"With that sort of woman?" said Janet. Her eyes blazed out of her white, strained face. "With a dancing girl?"

"When you promise to marry a man," he told her, believing little of his own argument, "you've got to allow—"

Janet pressed the knuckles of one

clenched hand hard against her lips. "I'll never marry him now," she said dully. "He'd just as well be dead—he is dead—in my eyes—dead and disgraced." Her voice broke.

"Don't be hard," he said, very gently.

She swept him with a look. In the slender sheath of her body, her spirit was all at once like a flaming sword that burned its way to sight.

"Dead," she said again, "and disgraced. He could do *that*—when I was coming to him—trusting him—believing in him—blindly— Do you remember—last night? I was angry with you because you said you loved me—because you asked me to marry you. I thought my loyalty to *him* suffered, if I even listened to you, and all the time—while I was babbling to you about him—ugh!" She broke off, her face pressed deep in her two shielding hands, her shoulders lifting and falling with long, struggling breaths. The soft voice roughened to an agonized whisper:

"What a little fool!"

"Don't!" begged Peacocke, his own voice, deep with tenderness, stumbled on the words. "Don't say that, little Janet! Don't think it! Of course, you believed in him—you want to believe in him now— A newspaper story is never more than half the truth—"

Janet took her hands down from her face abruptly. The clear sunlight touched her soft, pale skin, unmarred by tears. Her eyes were dry and burning. Her lips twisted into a smile that was without mirth.

"It's the other half," she said, "the half they haven't printed—that's killing me. A man doesn't go for—for a joy ride—with women like that—in his sober senses. You know that better than I could possibly tell you—don't you?"

"He had probably been drinking," said Peacocke carefully. "That is more of an excuse than you think."

"An excuse that needs an excuse—of its own. I told you," she reminded him desperately, "I'm insanely afraid of drunken men. It sickens me—even the thought. He must have been—"

She could not finish. After a moment, though, she went on blindly: "And women like that—any other woman would have been cruel enough— Oh, it's the half they haven't printed—"

A deck steward came out of the saloon and across to them briskly.

"Seen about your luggage, Mr. Peacocke?" he inquired deferentially. "Anything I can do, sir?"

Peacocke turned, with a quick interposing of his shoulders between Janet and the man's keen eyes.

"Get my bags, will you?—and see that the rug is strapped to the biggest one—I think that's all, John."

"Somebody to meet you, sir, of course?"

"Oh, yes," said Peacocke, a trifle impatiently, "the car'll be there— Get Moto to help you when we dock." A bill changed hands.

"Yes, sir—thank you, sir," said the steward, "thank you very much, Mr. Peacocke." He had glanced at one corner of the bill. "Anything I can do for the lady?"

Before Janet could speak, if she had chosen, Peacocke spoke for her:

"Come back later on—Miss Clay isn't ready to go down yet."

When the steward had gone, Peacocke turned to her swiftly.

"I beg your pardon, for taking things out of your hands like that—I'd like to save you any small annoyance—that I can."

"You are very good to me," said Janet.

While he had talked to the man, she had forced herself into a semblance of quietude that did not include her eyes. There the flame still burned devouringly, though her lips were steady enough, and the brilliant color, almost feverish in its intensity, that touched her cheeks was yet not marked enough for comment. Her hands hung linked before her, but that the fingers were rigidly interlocked only touch itself could have determined.

"You are very good," she repeated, "to have listened to all this—and I am sorry to have been—to have imposed—"

upon your good nature. I think, perhaps, I had better go down, now."

"You've had no breakfast," he reminded her.

She rejected the idea with a little stifled gesture of disgust, quite mute.

"Do you think," said Peacocke, very quietly, "that he will meet you—at the dock? You know, the paper says 'not desperately injured.'"

At the shudder that took her visibly, and the sudden blanching of her face, he could barely hold his protecting tenderness in check. For the moment, she was, more than anything else, a desperately frightened child.

"You shan't see him—unless you want to——" he told her.

She spoke with difficulty:

"I—never—want to see him."

"It is entirely with you. If you don't want to see him—you shan't."

"You are good to me," she said again.

A silence grew up between them and around them. Janet was dimly aware of it, and grateful for it. Her ears rang with the crumbling of the walls about her and her eyes ached for tears. She had no vivid sensation beyond hideous, immeasurable loss. Something that had been hers was dead and gone—snatched from her hands—flung fathoms deep into a murky gulf of shame. She stood on the shore of that gulf and marveled to find herself there, like one in some wretched dream—but the dream abided. By the height and breadth of her exaltation, so far was she beaten into the dust. Her lips parted, and a long, quivering sigh escaped them. Words crowded into her mind, and died away unspoken. She opened her hands, palm out, in a little intimate gesture of defeat.

"Well——" she said, and essayed a smile. It was more pitiful than much weeping.

Peacocke had been watching her, one hand sunk in his trousers pocket; now he took that hand out of its accustomed haven and folded his arms deliberately.

"Will you listen to me for a minute?" he asked her. "I have been thinking——"

"Why not?" she answered, unstead-

ily quiet. "You listened to me. I am rather ashamed of myself—for ranting so."

He shook his head, regarding her deeply.

"Hardly ranting. Have you thought what you will do now?—changing everything like this? Are you absolutely sure——"

She took fire again at once.

"You could forgive it—if you were a woman?"

Peacocke's look answered her before his lips. Ultimately, he found scrupulous words: "That is for you to decide."

CHAPTER III.

"I have decided," said Janet.

Peacocke nodded gravely.

"All right, then," he acquiesced. In a moment's pause, he had considered temporizing—and rejected it. "Now listen, and don't, for God's sake, misunderstand me! You remember what I asked you last night?"

Janet nodded in her turn. She looked at him curiously.

"I'm going to ask you again," he said. "Shall I put it into words, or will last night do?"

"Last night will do."

"I mean it," he told her. "Don't smile."

"I am smiling at myself," said Janet. She spoke almost lightly. The tension of the situation had wrought upon her to such an extent that she now no longer showed either grief or helplessness; only her eyes betrayed her by an unnatural brightness. "It's almost amusing, don't you think? I hated you so last night for the same thing that this morning gives me back a little—a very little—of my self-respect."

"Does it do that?"

"A very little," said Janet indifferently. She added: "But you needn't worry about me—there are hotels in Honolulu—aren't there?"

"Do you think that is my only reason," asked Peacocke, "for repeating what I said to you last night?"

She met his accusing eyes with a shrug. "I told you I didn't love you."

"I said I'd take a chance on that," he told her quietly.

"Why?" said Janet. She repeated with insistence, almost angry, "Why?—Why?"

Peacocke looked back at her deeply.

"I've never seen but one woman that I wanted for my wife," he said at last. "You happen to be that one. I don't believe you could come in daily contact with what I feel for you, and not take fire from it—ultimately. I'd have been willing to take a chance on it when you cared for another man— Now that he's put himself out of your life—" He stopped abruptly.

"Go on," said Janet, in swift, cold comprehension. "Don't be afraid of hurting me. He *has*. He's put himself so far outside—the dead couldn't be farther."

"That gives me an even bigger chance," said Peacocke. "You understand? I want to take care of you. I want to give you what you want out of the world—I want to make you—love me." He said the last two words under his breath.

"I'm afraid," she warned him, with more than a shade of mockery, "I've had enough of loving people."

"You're badly hurt," he said; "you'll heal. And I want to be within reach when you do."

"I might marry you," said Janet suddenly, "because I'm afraid—I've very little money, and no one to go to, out here. Or I might marry you for gratitude"—she swallowed a sob—"because I'm hideously alone, now—and you've been good to me. Or I might marry you"—her hand trembled upon the rail behind her—"so that, when he comes to me at last—with court plaster on his left temple, and a handful of explanations, I can stare at him and say, 'I don't know what you mean—I never meant to marry you,' and that would save my pride—a very little—I might do that."

Peacocke ignored the desperate bitterness in her voice.

"Any or all of those reasons are bad ones," he said coolly, "but any or all of them will do—to begin with."

"You must be mad," she marveled.

He made no defense.

Janet stared at him a little while without speaking. All the gentleness, and sweetness, and kindness that was in her shriveled in a consuming fire of shame. If she had loved Gillespie more, she might have been more forgiving; if she had loved him less, she might have been less exacting; but her love had dwelt on the high pinnacle of dreams so long that it had far to fall to reach the mire—small wonder, then, that her whole nature twisted crookedly beneath the strain.

Peacocke, watching her painful silence, and desiring vainly to comfort her, was vaguely aware of the throes of her inquisition. When her mocking gaze had endured an unbearable length, he spoke compellingly:

"Why won't you trust yourself to me?"

"You want me?" she asked, with a cynical semblance of humility. "I don't in the least care for you—in that way—you know that."

"I'll take a chance," said Peacocke, grimly stubborn.

"You'd like to have me marry you out of wounded pride—for a home, say?"

"I'd like to have you marry me for any reason you choose—and trust to converting you to mine."

"You deserve to have me do it," she said unevenly.

"I wish I did."

She caught her breath sharply at the clean simplicity of that last retort.

"Oh, you're decent," she cried; "you're wonderfully decent! If I could ever believe in anything, after this, I'd believe in *you*. But you'd want things of me—you'd want interest and comradeship—and love—I haven't got them now—I think I'll never have them again—for any man—"

He invested his curt speech with an inner meaning.

"I'd want nothing of you—unless you chose to give it to me."

From the crest of some wave of wretchedness, she lifted her unbelieving eyes to his, as to a sudden harbor.

"Nothing—on your honor—unless I chose?"

He answered the breathless, broken words quite steadily:

"Nothing—on my honor—until you chose."

"You must love me!" she wondered, a trifle wearily.

"I do."

With a little gasping laugh, Janet surrendered.

"I'll do it," she said. "I think we're both mad—but I'll do it."

A second later she would have retracted.

"No—no—no—no! It wouldn't be fair."

At that, and startlingly, before her eyes, Peacocke lost for a moment his habitual poise. The red swept up beneath his tan, his cool speech stammered.

"If you think *that*," he blundered, "it's the last thing on earth I'd want—to be unfair to you—"

Janet accepted hazily his obvious hurt denial.

"Not to me," she explained, and added desolately, "I wasn't thinking of myself—I don't much care—but it wouldn't be fair to you."

"Will you leave that to me?" said Peacocke. "You said once you'd do it."

She saw his acute anxiety for her reply without a quickening pulse. A recklessness beyond mere boundaries of speech obsessed and blinded her. She would have walked over the edge of a precipice with the same calm with which she now nodded her head in acquiescence.

"Yes," she said tonelessly, "I'll do it."

"Good enough!" said Peacocke. "Come down and get some breakfast now—coffee, at least."

The unexpected infusion of the commonplace into a situation fraught with melodramatic personalities had its effect on Janet's unsteady nerves. She followed Peacocke obediently across the deck and down to the dining hall.

Later, when she might have yielded to introspection, and so withdrawn, he left her neither space nor opportunity.

The boat docked at eight, and there were bags and rugs to be attended to in the little intervening time. Janet moved dazedly between small remaining tasks; tipping the stewardess, locking her steamer trunk, and pinning on her hat. Before the mirror she hesitated an imperceptible moment. Dry-eyed and flushed, her image looked back at her. There was a slender gold chain about its neck, and on the chain a locket with initials flowingly twisted. Janet undid the chain with shaking fingers, after which she dropped chain and locket together out of the porthole, and went up on deck, stumbling a little upon the stairs.

Peacocke was waiting for her at the saloon door.

"We're in," he said. "I've told John to look after your bags. How do you feel?"

"Do I look as bad as all that?" she asked unmirthfully.

He corrected his mistake with a casual gesture of denial.

"I think you needn't worry about seeing—any one—at the dock. My car will be waiting."

"I'm not worrying—now," said Janet.

She did not speak again until the boat grated against the pier.

"What a lot of people—every one waiting for somebody—"

"Some of them waiting for bags to carry," said Peacocke. A moment afterward, he stopped at the grinning salute of a khaki-clad and leather-capped chauffeur.

"Well, Moto! I look for you. You get bags *wiki-wiki*!"

"Yessir," said Moto.

"Lady go in car, too," ordered Peacocke. "*Wiki-wiki*, now! eh? Bags *hapai*."

"Yessir," said Moto again. He grinned fatuously.

Janet, walking close beside a blue serge sleeve, felt little shivers coursing through her. Her brain, numbed by the bruising sequence of events, accepted chaos as a matter of course. She felt Peacocke's hand upon her arm when the car was reached, and leaned back soon



"What is it?" asked Janet kindly.

after that upon cushions pleasantly leathery in smell.

She asked presently, her unseeing look upon the chauffeur's back:

"Where are you going?"

"To a church I know of."

"Oh!"

"Where I can leave you with the rector's wife while I come back for a license."

"Oh!" she said again.

"Had you rather—I think that would be best," said Peacocke thoughtfully.

She nodded, rolling her handkerchief into a tight little ball between suède-gloved hands.

"It suits you?" he insisted.

"Perfectly," said Janet.

To the rector's wife, Mrs. Ashton, a quaint, broad-faced old lady, in white muslin with a black jet bracelet upon one plump wrist, she softened no farther.

"My dear! my dear!" said Mrs. Ashton, with motherly zeal. "You *must* be tired. Six days on that boat! I don't like boats. They always make me ill. I take to my berth at once, and never leave it till land is in sight. Sit

here—this is a comfortable chair—or had you rather lie down till Mr. Peacocke gets back? He's a very fine young man, I am told. Albert has no personal knowledge of him. He does not attend our church. You are an Episcopalian, my dear?"

"Yes," said Janet, forcing herself to listen, "I am an Episcopalian. Thank you—I don't care to lie down. I am not tired."

"Then may I get you a cup of tea?" Mrs. Ashton insisted. She was quite disappointed when Janet refused it. "You mustn't be a nervous bride, my dear."

"I am not nervous," said Janet. Her dark eyes looked vaguely into Mrs. Ashton's kindly, blue ones.

"That's very nice," approved the good lady warmly. She patted Janet's unresponsive hand.

"Not but what I was nervous myself. I cried all day the day I was married—indeed I did."

"Then why did you marry him?" asked Janet. She caught herself up in dismay, even her reckless misery yielding to the horror in the old lady's face.

"I beg your pardon—I shouldn't have said that—of course—"

"It's nothing," said Mrs. Ashton at once. "It doesn't make a bit of difference, my dear. Of course, it may be hard for any one to see why I should have cried. I was the happiest girl in Virginia that day." She wagged a wise, gray head. "Woman's tears, you know—they don't always mean sorrow—any more than a woman's smile always means happiness. We're born liars—we folks in petticoats. Have you known Mr. Peacocke long?"

Janet considered painfully, taking her cue, perhaps, from Mrs. Ashton's philosophy of the sex.

"Oh, yes—rather long. I suppose you find it strange—marrying—like this?"

"Dear me, no!" said Mrs. Ashton. "We marry them all the time, my dear—but I will admit that yours is a prettier romance than most—you decided on the ship, I think Mr. Peacocke said?"

"Yes—on the ship," echoed Janet.

"With flying fish and moons," said Mrs. Ashton playfully.

"There was no moon," said Janet. Her thoughts went back confusedly to that last night, and the bow of the ship.

"No moon?" sighed her hostess; "dear me! dear me! However, I dare say you didn't miss it. You wouldn't have missed half a dozen moons. Love's young dream doesn't miss anything, does it? Ah, well! Once in a lifetime that's just as it should be."

The endless ripple of small talk covered Janet's unnatural stillness as no deliberate effort on her own part could have done. Beneath Mrs. Ashton's gentle chatter, the girl slipped for a little into a blankness void and grateful.

From this comparative ease, a kindly question recalled her sharply.

"I always say to Albert," Mrs. Ashton was concluding, "that there is so much significance in a man's Christian name. What is Mr. Peacocke's?"

Janet lifted startled eyes. The exigency of the moment spurred her senses, dulled by the torment of the last few hours.

"Pardon?" she said faintly, fencing for time.

"His Christian name, my dear?" repeated Mrs. Ashton, in pleasant curiosity.

"I must seem stupid," Janet explained, forcing a smile. "I was thinking of something else—" She added, with a little flame of daring sprung from the ashes of the morning's recklessness: "I call him Tommy—"

"Tommy Peacocke," Mrs. Ashton repeated musingly. She nodded and smiled, mercifully inquiring no further.

"We have three boys ourselves—one in England—one in the States, and one on a plantation in Maui—what is it, my dear? Is that breeze too much for you?"

"I like it," said Janet.

"I thought I saw you shiver," Mrs. Ashton suggested. She came over to where Janet stood beside the window, and put both kindly arms about the girl's slim waist.

"Your mother isn't here," she said, "so you must let me take her place this morning. Be a good little girl, my dear, and love your husband so much that you forget yourself. You'll need to. We all do. I'm sure you'll be very happy with him. He has a good face. God bless you, my dear!—God bless you!"

The tears that every woman has for every other woman's wedding stood in the kind, old eyes, and the lips that touched Janet's cheek trembled a little.

"I'll call Albert," said Mrs. Ashton hastily.

Her departing footsteps sounded down the hall.

Janet waited in the silent room, without moving. When, a little later, she heard her name in summons, she answered at once and went out, fastening the glove upon her left hand with fingers that shook a little and were very cold.

CHAPTER IV.

The little church was very quiet. In the palms outside, the birds quarreled like mad, and a fat, gray cat prowled stealthily among the ferns, hunting for

lizards; but within the church was peace and the cool of the morning. Through stained-glass windows behind the chancel the sunlight diffused itself mellowly, falling upon the altar in patches of purple, and blue, and crimson, and casting beyond it a wide, dim rainbow of splendor. Carven angels upholding the rafters looked down in an immovable benediction.

Janet, standing quietly beside Peacocke, her eyes on a splotch of scarlet that fell strangely across the calla lilies on the altar, remembered suddenly, and without apparent sequence, a line from some long-ago magic verse. She said it over in her own mind while the minister's voice went on, without urge or appeal, in the forest-cool stillness about her. It was a lilting line.

And threw warm gules on Madeline's young breast.

Madeline's young breast, thought Janet, could have been no whiter than the callas; no gules warmer than the crimson splotch.

She cast about vaguely for the ensuing line, and could not remember it; then came back, with a start, as if an icy wind had blown upon her, to a compelling question:

"Timothy, wilt thou have this woman—"

Peacocke's hand had closed on hers, somehow ungloved now, and mutely unresisting. To the tips of her fingers, a current ran quivering. Life closed in upon her like the four walls of a prison. She caught her breath sharply, and set her teeth upon her lower lip.

An immense and cruel helplessness held her still. She could all at once have shrieked in terror, like some wild creature with its foot in the teeth of a trap, but her lips only parted dryly without sound.

The man's voice answered, very coolly, yet in a hush of feeling:

"I will!"

Immeasurably later, she shivered at lofty words of doom—"until death us do part"—and felt fingers tighten strongly upon hers as if the trap were setting itself faster than ever. The

crimson splotch on the callas had spread to the golden cross in the center of the altar. The minister prompted:

"I, Janet, take thee, Timothy—"

And Janet said it after him dully. Her pulse fluttered in her throat. In her own ears her voice came unbelievably strange. She clung to the tightening fingers with a desperation blindly unconscious.

"I, Janet, take thee, Timothy—"

The words went on and on, a succession of bruises, slow turnings of a knife in an open wound. Door after door closed upon her, each shutting her faster within an undesired isolation from old things. "For better, for worse—for richer, for poorer—in sickness, in health—" Then the awful, hopeless finality of the end. "Until—death—us—do—part—" repeated Janet, with lips that moved slower to each syllable—and felt the cool, circling contact of the ring upon the third finger of her left hand.

That stung her to vivid life again, for the wedding ring clinked faintly against another, the inconspicuous pearls and sapphires of Gillespie's gift.

Her eyes, lifted in uncontrollable horror, met Peacocke's calmer ones.

"Wait!" he said, so quietly that Doctor Ashton, a trifle deaf, and more than a trifle nearsighted, neither heard nor saw the interruption. The pearl-and-sapphire ring slipped from Janet's hand beneath a careful touch, and the narrow gold band remained.

Peacocke put the other man's ring into his pocket.

Five minutes later Doctor Ashton came down from the chancel and kissed Janet upon the cheek.

"An old man's privilege, my dear," he explained, "and a minister's. May you be very, very happy." He wrung Peacocke's hand warmly.

"Young man, if you're not good to her, she has only to let me know, and I'll call down the thunders of the Church upon your head."

"I hope to be good to her, sir," said Peacocke simply.

Janet, lifting frightened eyes, met the clear tenderness of her husband's smile.

It was a smile that twisted habitually and quizzically at one corner of the firm-cut lips. She forced a look in answer. She could not speak.

Mrs. Ashton put both arms around her.

"You poor child!" she cried anxiously. "You're as tired as you can be. Take her right home, Mr. Peacocke, and let her get a good, long rest. Those wretched boats! I'm ill for a week after I come off of one of them—and I'm a healthy, old woman—not a slip of a creature like you, my dear." She kissed Janet warmly. "What you need is a cup of tea and a good nap. Let me get you some tea, *now*."

"Oh, thank you—no!" said Janet. "Please!"

She looked so distressed that Peacocke intervened.

"It's very good of you, Mrs. Ashton, but I think, perhaps, we'd better go on down to the hotel—at once. I'm going to take her to the Young for a day or two, until my house is put in shape. I've been keeping bachelor hall, you see—"

"You're very wise," Mrs. Ashton approved, with a comfortable chuckle. "Have it swept and dusted before she sees it. I know what these Japanese servants can be, without a woman over them."

Janet fingered her gloves in a shaken silence.

"Is there anything to be signed, before we go?" Peacocke reminded Doctor Ashton.

The minister beckoned two young men from the body of the church into the vestry.

"Here are your witnesses," he explained, "two of my Bible-class students who happened to be within reach—now, Mrs. Peacocke!"

So they were married—and presently Moto cranked up the silent machine that stood before the rectory gate, and Janet leaned back upon the cushions in a relaxation she was powerless to control.

"Tired?" asked Peacocke briefly.

The car swung into Lunalilo Street,

and Janet held herself steady, with one hand clutching the side.

"No," she answered, with obvious effort; "I'm not tired—exactly."

"Nervous?" he suggested. "I wish you'd let go and ease up a bit. It's not good for you—holding yourself together so hard."

"I was—thinking," said Janet.

The car lurched over a rut, and Peacocke spoke curtly to the chauffeur.

"Don't tell me unless you like," he said, when he turned back to Janet again.

"I was thinking," she said—she hesitated only the barest fraction of a second over telling him—"that it takes a brave man—and woman—to go through that ceremony—without—a great love—doesn't it?"

Peacocke looked at her squarely. He shook his head.

"I'm no judge," he said slowly, "not having gone through it—without—"

Janet did not speak for some moments. She watched, with wide, dark eyes, in which fear was gradually giving way to weariness, the stretches of turf that spread from white-pillared houses and slant-roofed bungalows down to the street. Everywhere palms lifted their gracile lines against the tropic clearness of the sky, and the flame of the scarlet hibiscus lightened the hedges.

"What is that purple thing?" she asked once, in spite of herself, when the car turned into another street, and a mass of royal bloom swung down from the branches of a tree.

"Buginvillea," Peacocke told her. He added absently: "Lots of that on my lawn."

Janet asked no more questions. She sat back in a fathomless silence, and fought to realize the truth. Like the old woman in the nursery rhyme, her soul beat madly against actualities with the futile burden, "Lord have mercy on us—this is none of I!" It scarcely seemed possible to her panic-stricken consciousness that a few words, the mere signing of her name on a flimsy sheet of paper, could fetter her so ir-

retrievably to the mad impulse of a moment. She cast a glance at Peacocke from under lowered lids. He was strange to her with the strangeness of an alien tongue, the poignant and absolute strangeness of alien speech.

"Until death us do part"—the sentence hung in her doomed ears—and the man beside her was not so near as the Japanese woman trotting impassively along the sidewalk, kimono-ed and obi-ed, in the shade of a blue silk parasol. There, at least, Janet felt the touch of kinship—a common humanity. Here she struggled impotently against a frenzy of unreality.

Out of the depths of this struggle, she followed Peacocke into the lobby of a large, graystone building, into the elevator, and up to the hotel office, where she watched him signing casually his name—afterward a mordant line: "and Mrs. Peacocke."

He made no comment on what must have been as strange to him as to her; asked for rooms, and gave orders about the luggage, with an intentional commonplaceness that steadied Janet as no lighter comment could have done. Only, once in the sitting room of their suite, with the bell boy tipped and dismissed, he turned to her swiftly. It was the first open evidence of emotion he had displayed that morning.

"It's hard," he said, "it's damnably hard to—know how to make it easiest for you. I don't want to thrust myself on you, but I do want to take care of you—in a way you won't mind—will you tell me if there's anything I leave undone? Will you?"

Janet answered him with difficulty, leaning against the table in the middle of the room, and tracing with her forefinger the cover of a magazine that lay there. It was a gaudy cover and a cheap magazine.

"Why speak of thrusting yourself?—you have a right——"

"Don't—I beg you," he interrupted her sternly. "I don't want any talk of rights until and unless your inclination goes with it. But will you let me be good to you?—just that—and, in return, be fair to me? Don't work your-

self up to the point of being afraid of me. No need, eh?"

A formless impulse of generosity took Janet strongly.

"I know," she breathed, "there's no need—and you have been good to me already——" She smiled at him rather mistily.

Presently she drew the pins from her hat—it cost her something of an effort, symbolizing, as it did to her sensitized perceptions, the beginning of closer relations—and laid the hat upon the table. Her hair was crushed and flattened from the contact, and she loosened it with accustomed fingers.

"I'll have some tea sent up for you," said Peacocke, watching her. He stopped on his way to the bell, and turned back.

"There's something—will you let me ask you a question? After this, we'll call it a dead issue."

"About——" Janet moistened her dry lips and began again. "About Carter Gillespie?"

Peacocke nodded.

"It's simply this—he's more than apt to look you up and find you. Don't you think, when he does, you'd better see him—just once—and have it over with?"

"I had rather not."

"I know," he frowned thoughtfully. "I can quite understand that. Still—you'd hardly like him to think you were afraid to see him—afraid to trust yourself—would you?"

The blood of many ancestors who had died, in the parlance of the time, with their boots on, tingled suddenly in Janet's cheeks. She lifted her head with an amazing hauteur.

"Afraid—to trust myself?"

"I know," Peacocke agreed, "it's an absurdity, of course, but he'd be apt to entertain absurdities—in his present frame of mind. You see what I mean? Under the circumstances, it might be just as well to let him see there's no chance—for romancing." He closed and unclosed his left hand sharply several times. "Mind! I'm speaking of his point of view—not yours or mine. I don't know what yours is; mine is this

—that if you'd cared as much about him as you thought you did, you'd have found an excuse for him this morning when you saw that paper. Your first question would have been—"Is he hurt?"—instead of "What is a hula girl?" You'd have turned heaven and earth upside down for a reason for forgiving him."

"You think I have no pride," she demanded fiercely.

"Plenty of pride," said Peacocke, smiling. "That's just why I conclude you didn't love him very badly. The two don't mix." He added unexpectedly: "You'll see him when he comes—won't you?"

"Why are you so sure he will come?" Janet asked painfully.

"It's highly probable," said Peacocke, "that he supposes you will forgive him."

He took the pearl-and-sapphire ring from his pocket and laid it upon the table between them.

"You will want to give this back to him," he suggested. "Suppose I ring for that tea now—eh?"

When he had given a brief order to the Japanese waiter, soft-footed and smiling, who answered the bell, he took his hat from the chair where he had placed it, and thrust an investigating hand into his trousers pocket.

"You won't mind if I leave you for an hour or two? The tea'll be up presently. Just send the boy on any errand that occurs to you. I've got some business to look after that'll take me down to the office for a bit. Anything I can get for you while I'm out?"

"Nothing—thank you—for me," said Janet.

"Sure? All right, then. Try and get a nap. You're fagged, of course. If you want me for anything at all, ring two-three-eight-six—don't hesitate. I'll be right in the office."

"Very well," said Janet. She considered vainly a phrase that should seem less ungracious, and, while she considered, he nodded and smiled with no more personal significance than he might have shown to another man. The door closed lightly behind him.

Upon that closing, Janet drew a long breath, and buried her face in her hands. Not all Peacocke's reassuring aloofness freed her from the sharp, trapped sense of fear. She steeled herself against a storm of tears, but no tears came. Instead, her breathing grew quieter, and the beating of her heart slowed to a steadier pace than it had known since she had left the ship. She was even conscious of an indistinct hunger and a wish for the tea Peacocke had ordered.

Five or ten minutes she stood by the table, staring at the ring that lay close to the gaudy magazine. At the end of that time, she went over to the window and pushed up the blind. Across the street was an open garage—a long shed covering half a dozen cars—and beyond the garage, the walls and roofs of buildings rose sordidly.

A Chinaman, hurrying along the opposite sidewalk, caught her indifferent glance; she pushed the blind a very little higher to look at him, and, at the gesture, a young man who had been standing before the shed, deep in conversation with one of the native chauffeurs, turned and saw her. He was a tall young man, blond, with an air of neatness almost foppish, and he wore his panama hat pulled well down over his eyes—Janet, with a shudder, guessed why. His start upon seeing her and his swift turning to the entrance of the hotel made his intention unmistakable. With the first eager gesture that carried his hand to his hat, Janet knew that she could not evade seeing him.

She bent her head in a gesture of acquiescence, and drew down the blind. It occurred to her that he would undoubtedly ask at the office for Miss Clay, and, to forestall an unpleasant complication, she took the ring from the table and went out of the room, not knowing clearly, in the immediate exigency, what she was to say to him.

On her way down in the elevator, her glance fell on a mirror, and she wondered curiously that, after all the morning's torturing changes, her face should look back at her so much the same.



"Oh—a girl!" said Mrs. Fitzhugh softly.

CHAPTER V.

Gillespie was crossing the floor to the desk as Janet left the elevator. He turned at her approach and came to meet her with one hand outstretched, the other reluctantly taking his hat from his head. The left temple was crossed with strips of adhesive plaster. Beyond that, however, and in his bearing, there was no sign of disaster. His gray eyes glowed with welcome a trifle nervous; his voice shook with excitement.

"I was just about to ask for you," he explained, in a haste that verged upon a stammer. "I came straight up—when I saw you at that window, why, it—I—"

"Come into the parlor," said Janet. She released her hand as soon as possible, and added, unbelievably cool to her own incredulous ears: "We can't talk here."

Gillespie followed her, repeating uneasily:

"When I looked up and saw you at that window——"

"You must have been surprised," Janet suggested.

Having found the parlor empty, she chose a large, green velvet chair, facing a large, red one, sat down, and folded her hands in her lap. Rather, she laid the right hand over the left, which held closely and safe for the moment from observation the pearl-and-sapphire ring. If the gesture also covered her wedding ring, it was not, on her part, a matter of premeditation.

Gillespie glanced about the room and ignored the safe distance of the red chair. He stooped to touch

Janet's hands, and said her name, in a whisper.

"Sit down—please!" said Janet hurriedly. "Some one may come."

He sat down, drawing his chair very near. His voice obtained an instant emotion.

"Janet, darling——"

But Janet's eyes fastened themselves, entirely without her intention, upon those strips of adhesive plaster, and the look left her face barren of response. Gillespie moved nervously.

"I can never forgive myself," he said, "for not being able to meet your boat this morning. You're sore about it—aren't you, sweetheart? No wonder! Only, I wish you'd believe that I tried—like blazes—give you my word, dear. It simply wasn't possible. If you knew everything——" There he came to an abrupt and damning pause. If she knew everything, he reflected, in a flash of unhappy wisdom, it might be not greatly to his advantage. The thought

brought stricken and remorseful recollection in its train.

"Yes?" said Janet. The monosyllable served her in place of more definite speech. To her own unbounded surprise, Gillespie's presence exerted no influence upon her overwrought consciousness. The little details of his personality upon which for weeks she had fed a wistful and hungry longing, had now no power to move her. She saw without the shadow of a thrill that the line of his mouth and chin was absolutely unchanged. It had endured in her memory veraciously, but the sight of it now awoke no feeling beyond a sort of lassitude. She remembered that he had always had an undergraduate fondness for matching stockings, tie, and scarfpin, and she noticed, with a sort of abstracted accuracy, that his tie was now a dull lavender, his scarfpin an amethyst plainly set, and his stockings an inoffensively grayish purple.

"Yes?" she said again, when he fumbled obviously for words; then she waited, regarding him aloofly, lips and eyes too still for his comfort.

Gillespie looked down at his hands appraisingly.

"Fact is," he said, with an air of impulsive frankness, "I was in an accident last night—motoring accident. That's where I got this gash on my forehead—quite a few bruises, too. Nasty spill. I'd been dining with a fellow I met on the boat coming down from Maui—he got a machine after dinner—we went for a ride——" His glib explanation tripped and stumbled. "Steering gear—that's the worst of a machine—you never can tell——" The fullness of some gripping recollection stopped and stifled him. For a moment he breathed hard, then something in the cold fixity of Janet's look focused his incoherent defense.

"Janet," he said huskily, "why are you looking at me like that?"

"Like what?" asked Janet.

"As if you——" He swallowed and began again: "As if you had stopped loving me."

"Was I looking at you like that?" said Janet evenly.

Gillespie strove to decipher the inscrutable weariness of her face.

"Janet!" he said all at once, hoarsely. "Janet! You haven't—have you?"

"I suppose," said Janet, "that you could not come down to the boat because——"

"The doctor out at the hospital," Gillespie explained hurriedly, "wouldn't hear of my leaving till he had a look at this cut again. I tried every way under heaven—it almost drove me mad to think of your getting in alone—getting off the boat, alone—coming into a strange place like this—alone—Janet! Will you ever forgive me?"

"For what?" asked Janet curiously. In a circle of wondering, she repeated dully to herself that his voice, his look, the touch of his hand, the whole presence of him, had no more effect upon her than the presence of any stranger.

"Forgive you for what?" she insisted.

"Oh—my letting you get in like that—alone—everything!"

She had given him his one faint chance of rehabilitation—by confession, and, with barely a second's hesitation, he had refused it.

So Janet looked back at him, unmoved.

"I was not alone," she said.

His excitement carried him past her admission, unheeding.

"You," he said, "coming out from the other side of the world—for me—and I not there to meet you. It was rotten—rotten! I can't begin to tell you—it makes me sick of myself—I feel like a beast—Janet——"

The hotel parlor was large and empty. Suddenly, in the security of its loneliness, Gillespie closed desperately on Janet's hands. She resisted him, shaken with repulsion.

"You're not like yourself," he muttered. "You're changed to me—I've been mad for you, and your letters said you wanted me—but you don't look it—you've changed. You're cold. Janet—if you've heard anything——"

"Heard what?" asked Janet breathlessly. She twisted her hands in his

feverish hold, and quite suddenly, without her intention, the pearl-and-sapphire ring spilled out with a tiny tinkling crash upon the floor. Gillespie lifted her left hand and looked at it stupidly. The wedding ring circled the slender third finger. He looked from it to her face and back again, an immense incredulity growing in his eyes.

"What's that?" he asked simply.

An instant came and went in silence—out of which silence Janet realized gropingly a hitherto unconsidered phase of the situation.

To admit to Gillespie that she had learned of his shameful defection before marrying the other man involved an injustice to that other man of which all at once she found herself incapable. A blind, unemotional loyalty to the one who had played her fairest possessed her. In that brief second's consideration, she settled heavily upon one thing, steeling herself to its painful achievement. Her lips parted twice before the right words came. Gillespie's face was ominously empty of anticipatory understanding.

"I told you," she said at last, "that I was not alone."

If she had feared a storm of incoherent reproach, it was because its reflex agitated her own soul.

"What do you mean?" asked Gillespie. He stared, with eyes that widened grotesquely, into the whiteness of her face.

Janet fought off a sick desire for flight, and faced him in a surface calm. She spoke very slowly, so slowly that each word echoed in her own ears appallingly.

"I am with—my—husband."

"What?" said Gillespie—nothing more. A minute went by, and then another, leadenly.

In the corridor outside, a man passed, whistling. Gillespie held up a finger.

"Hear that?" his voice shook queerly.

"What is it?" asked Janet faintly.

He smiled in a rather ghastly fashion.

"I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now?"

The red swept Janet's face and faded.

"You are insulting," she said.

"So you are married?" said Gillespie. He added, after a moment, stupidly, "Married!"

Then his whole body quivered with a tension that was the culmination of twenty-four hours' strain.

"You knew?" he demanded fiercely, "did you? You threw me over when you heard of it? Janet—Janet!—it's like some rotten dream—I can't believe it. When were you—and after those letters—four years of 'em! All our plans! You're not telling me the truth—say you're not—you're trying to punish me! It's coming to me, all right—but, Janet—you're saying it because you've heard—you're trying to punish me—aren't you?—Janet?—aren't you?"

Before the pitiful childishness of his unbelief, Janet turned her eyes aside. Yet she struck unflinchingly:

"No. It's true."

"Married?"

She bent her head silently.

"Who?"

"Timothy Peacocke."

"Here?" said Gillespie. It was almost a gasp of pain.

"Yes—here."

"Because you heard——"

Then Janet lied, for Peacocke's sake. Being altogether free of any encumbering emotion where he was concerned, she lied very coolly.

"Heard what?"

"You have not heard?" Gillespie insisted savagely. "Then you must have—for no reason——" His voice broke on a shriller note. "Janet—for God's sake—why?"

Janet looked him fairly in the eyes. She did not answer at once, but her look spoke for her.

"I found I had made a mistake," she said at last distinctly. Which, in its essence, was not so much a lie as the abhorrent truth.

There was a rather cruel silence after that, in the big, high-ceilinged room. Gillespie sat with his elbows on his knees, hands clasping and unclasping before him, and stared at the floor. His breath came hard. In the green velvet chair, Janet waited with taut nerves;

and a large, gilt clock on the wall ticked solidly.

"When?" asked the man at last.

"This morning."

He smiled with difficulty.

"No time lost."

Janet made him no answer.

"We're quits," he said presently, very bitterly. "You threw me over—but it's the Lord's truth that you had a right to—if you'd only known. You will know—when you see the papers. I'd just as well tell you. I was out with a bunch I'd no business with—last night. Another man and a couple of half-whites. The other man was killed. We'd been drinking——" He flung the truth at her brutally, despairingly, waiting to see her wince, but she looked back at him steadily enough. "It's a pretty story. I've been cursing myself all morning—but it seems you'd finished with me, anyhow. Good business."

Looked to, obviously, for an answer, Janet could only echo wearily:

"Yes. I've finished with you."

"Janet!" cried Gillespie suddenly. Face and voice took on for the moment an incongruous boyishness. Not even the betraying circles about the gray eyes, nor the looseness of that quivering lower lip, could make him for the moment other than appealing. "Janet! I thought you were square—I believed in you——" Tears of weakness reddened his eyelids, and two slipped down his cheeks. "You're like all the other women—aren't you? I'm stung."

"I think I shall have to go now," said Janet.

She got to her feet, holding to the green chair, and stood there with face averted. A wave of nausea swept over her at sight of Gillespie's tears. She did not know that if she had loved him they would have compelled her arms and lips, instantly, blindly, to his comforting, no matter what hurt she had suffered at his hands.

Instead, she turned away from him, wrung to the inmost fiber of her being with a sick and shivering aversion.

"I shall have to go," she repeated dully.

Gillespie dropped his face for a mo-

ment into his hands. When he lifted it, the tears were dried. Reddened traces faded as she looked at him. He stood up and settled his tie with unsteady fingers.

"Good-by," he said, with a sort of stricken bravado. "I reckon this is good-by?"

"Yes," said Janet. "Good-by."

One word broke from him chokingly: "Janet——"

But Janet crossed the room, with hands that felt gropingly for chairs and tables in the way, and feet that dragged. She did not look at him again.

In the elevator she remembered that the pearl-and-sapphire ring had fallen to the floor, and wondered queerly if Gillespie had picked it up before he went. If he had not, she considered—this, later, within the shelter of her room—there was no great difference. The woman who swept would find it, wear it, perhaps, with pride. She, in any case, had done with it.

CHAPTER VI.

Before a stationer's in King Street, Mrs. Fitzhugh's new car came to a graceful and gliding stop, and Mrs. Fitzhugh herself responded to the flatteringly affectionate greeting of a young man in spotless flannels, who carried his hat with an air, in a brown left hand.

"Hel-lo, Jimmy!" said Mrs. Fitzhugh, with an indescribable inflection that elevated the first word almost to the dignity of a caress. She smiled at him from under the shadow of a broad, white hat, and, when she smiled, the corners of her red, soft mouth tipped upward, faunlike. Mrs. Fitzhugh was frankly beautiful. Her hair was black, but soft as a baby's. It had none of the heavy, greasy look that makes black hair so often an affliction rather than a loveliness. Her eyes were gray, rubbed in with a smutty finger, and her nose was prouder than Lucifer. A Spanish mother had set the languidly alluring menace in those eyes, but an Irish father had put a dimple in her left cheek, and a sense of humor, at times

diabolically inappropriate—if you took its victims' words for it—into her heart. The result was disproportionate and irresistible. Mrs. Fitzhugh strung her conquests as a child strings beads. She walked upon hearts and laughed to hear them crack.

Women disliked her unanimously, and men bound themselves to her chariot wheels as to a life preserver. She had been married at twenty, widowed at twenty-five, and, at thirty, she now sought whom she might devour—satisfactorily. It is only justice to say that a great many men would cheerfully have ranged themselves as soup, fish, entrée, or roast upon that menu.

In spite of which, Mrs. Fitzhugh remained a widow. She had once been heard to say, with a grimace that half converted the hearer, that liberty covered a multitude of sins, and was, therefore, too interesting to resign readily.

Upon the present occasion, she looked, however, as if no such pleasing heresy had ever entered her mind. Taking her hands from the wheel—she drove her own car—she folded them innocently upon her white serge lap, and returned young Wilding's look with interest.

"Upon my word," she said sweetly, "you're fit as a fiddle—after all those waltzes last night. How do you manage it, Jimmy? You've the eye of an infant."

"Did you look in the glass before you came out?" retorted Wilding. He stood with one foot on the step of the machine, and grinned cheerfully at its occupant. "You look as if you'd been picking daisies at sunrise, yourself."

Mrs. Fitzhugh shook her charming head.

"If I had, dear boy, I should probably look not nearly so nice as I do—eh? Sunrises are wearing. Faith, if I ever met one, I'd die of fright. Where are you goin'? And what's new? An' if you love me, Jimmy, what's the time? I came off without my watch."

"It's—exactly half past eleven," said Wilding carefully. He snapped his

watch shut, and returned it to its pocket. "And I'm going to lunch with you at the Young—if you'll have me."

"I'll think it over," conceded Mrs. Fitzhugh. She blinked at him sleepily.

"By the way," he observed, grappling news at random for the favor of his goddess, "Timothy Peacocke's back. Got in this morning on the *Manchuria*. I met him up the street a bit ago. Miss Dallas came out on the same boat—to visit the Graemes. Remember her? Nice little girl with fuzzy, red hair."

"Where did you see him?" inquired Mrs. Fitzhugh briefly. The sleepiness in her eyes gave place abruptly to an alert attention.

"Who? Peacocke? Oh, somewhere up the street—at the bank, I think it was. He's black as a nigger with sunburn."

Mrs. Fitzhugh sat upright and smoothed her gloves. She laid preparatory hands upon the wheel.

"Oh, I say—I thought you were going to have lunch with me?" Wilding protested aggrievedly.

"Mañana, dear boy, mañana! This is business. I've got some sugar stock I want to sell, an' he always advises me about that sort of thing. I've been dyin' for him to get back. It's good news you've brought me—see you soon, Jimmy—"

Wilding flung out one hand in a dramatic gesture of futility.

"Jilted, am I?"

"Adios," said Mrs. Fitzhugh. Her dimple deepened for a moment. "An' go on with you for a lyn' sinner. You'll get somebody else to lunch with you, an' no trouble at all, at all. Adios, mi amigo!"

She swung the heavy car skillfully out from the curb, turned, and slid away in the direction of Fort Street, in a flutter of dust. Wilding looked ruefully after her for a moment, then put on his hat, and walked off without haste in an opposite direction.

Before a three-story building of gray concrete, Mrs. Fitzhugh stopped the car again and sprang to the ground. Her white serge frock showed presently a high light within the gloom of a

leisurely rising elevator. Outside the elevator, however, and sheltered by the loneliness of a deserted corridor, she paused long enough to apply to her smooth olive skin the fragrant dust of a tiny powder puff, and to touch with accustomed fingers the heavy softness of her hair. When she turned the knob of the door that opened into Peacocke's offices, her look was the perfection of languid indifference, her smile a purely perfunctory sweetness.

A stenographer came forward to meet her, with a look of recognition.

"I should like," said Mrs. Fitzhugh, "to see Mr. Peacocke."

"By appointment?" asked the girl abstractedly.

Whereupon Mrs. Fitzhugh sent in her card with a scribbled line.

Peacocke left his desk, as she entered the little private room, and met her with outstretched hand. He pressed her fingers warmly.

"Hello, Chloe!" he said pleasantly. "How did you know I was back? Glad to see you again. Got something for me to do for you? How about your H. C. & S. stock. I see by this morning's paper it's selling at thirty-eight fifty."

"Are you an addin' machine or a man?" inquired Mrs. Fitzhugh, with a delicious and barely perceptible upthrusting of her soft lower lip. "Let me sit down, if you please, an' say how-do-you-do, before you ask me my business. You're lookin' fine, Timothy, dear—an' amazin' burned. Have a good time on the coast?"

"Good enough," said Peacocke leisurely. He leaned back in the chair before his desk, and smiled at her vivid, dark loveliness, folding his arms meanwhile with a subtle suggestion of disinterest that did not escape Mrs. Fitzhugh's observation.

"Warm?" she queried, sighing.

"Beastly warm," said Peacocke, "and dull. New York was a little better—not much."

"Glad to get back?"

He thought of Janet's face against the dusky coolness of the little church that morning, and nodded.

"And then some," he added, in the expressive vernacular.

"I missed you," said Mrs. Fitzhugh, with undeniable sincerity.

"Good old Chloe!" he returned warmly.

Mrs. Fitzhugh suppressed an irritation that threatened to pucker the smoothness of her brow. She drew off her gloves and assumed a look of impersonal intentness. Faintly, the side-long glance of her sea-blue eyes from under shadowy lashes suggested a watching cat, and nothing in the slender, supple-moving lines of her body jarred upon the suggestion.

"I did think of sellin' my H. C. & S.," she said thoughtfully. "That's what I'm here about. I need some money. *Ay de mi!* Was there ever a time when I didn't? Money's the devil for gettin' away from me, eh? Well—so I thought I'd ask your advice—"

"How much do you need?" asked Peacocke.

"I owe a power of bills." She smiled, and again the corners of her mouth tilted in that queerly faunlike fashion. "Fig leaves come high, in this Garden of Eden. Then the new car—it's below, now—oh, I'm broke, Timothy, dear—quite flat. I must have some money. Shall we sell—eh? What's the good of holdin' on for it to go up? It's a beggar I am—no less."

"What about the Punahu rents?"

"Spent," said Mrs. Fitzhugh lightly. "Flung to the birds and gone to the demnition bow-wows."

He frowned and was silent.

"Timothy, dear—I'm an extravagant fool—eh?"

Peacocke smiled in spite of himself at the lure of her mock contrition.

"An' you curse the day you were put in charge of the estate—don't you?" she sighed. "Poor, dear, old Michael—if he'd known what trouble he was makin' for you! Ah, well! It's a hard world, an' the top o' the mornin's soon over. Mañana never comes. I'm nothin' but a bother—eh, Timothy, dear?"

"You're a beautiful fraud," said Peacocke. He looked at her as he might at

a pleasing picture, and smiled, and shook his head at her. "I'm not at all sure you'd be wise to sell that particular stock. Stocks are going up with a jump before Christmas—as soon as Congress adjourns, and this tariff-revision scare is over. How much Ewa have you got?"

"I sold it," she admitted sadly, "while you were gone."

"Well, upon my word!" said Peacocke, amazed.

Before the appealing softness of her look, a softness blent, somehow, and lightened with an irrepressible deviltry, he laughed outright.

"High time I came back, Chloel!"

"I told you I missed you," said Mrs. Fitzhugh.

Peacocke ignored the personal equation indulgently.

"You will never learn the value of money," he said succinctly, "until you reduce yourself to a pauper."

"What am I now?" inquired Mrs. Fitzhugh resentfully. She added, with a daring glance, "No matter. I've got you to pull me out of the bog—eh, Timothy, dear?"

Peacocke drummed softly upon his desk and frowned.

"You're me guardian angel," said Mrs. Fitzhugh.

The sincerity of her wiles revealed itself always and infallibly by a difference in accent. When she coquetted deliberately, her Spanish floated to the top; but in moments of earnest—rare, it must be admitted—the Irish father got the best of her. Her brogue now thickened deliciously. The sea-blue eyes widened and darkened. "Many's the time you've saved me life—eh? An' will again, Timothy, dear."

"Rot!" said Peacocke frankly. He smiled and thrust his hands into his pockets. "You're a true Celt, Chloe. You exaggerate—delightfully. I've done no more than any other man in the same position would do."

The door opened, and the stenographer appeared with a bundle of letters in her hand.

"Excuse me, Mr. Peacocke," she interrupted mildly, "but some of these let-

ters, Mr. Burns says, require an immediate answer. Will he dictate them?"

"Plenty of time," said Peacocke, with a slight frown. "I'll attend to them, myself."

The stenographer withdrew.

"Ten thousand pardons!" cried Mrs. Fitzhugh. She stood up lazily. "I'd no idea I was absorbin' so much of your time. Well—I'll sell then—eh?"

"If you must have the money—I suppose so."

She smiled at his grudging acquiescence.

"I must, Timothy, dear—or beg my bread—an' gasoline for the new car." She laid an unexpected hand, slim-fingered and soft, upon his sleeve. "Come out to dinner with me to-night—eh? I've missed you somethin' shameful. I've a new gown I'll wear for your highness—a jewel of a gown—American-beauty chiffon, if ye know what that is—an' ye don't, of course. Do, now—will ye? I've had the dinin' room done over—my cook's a treasure—I'll give ye a salad—"

"I'm sorry, Chloe," Peacocke began slowly. While he considered for Janet's sake the most conventional fashion of announcing his marriage, Mrs. Fitzhugh took umbrage at his apparent reluctance.

"No matter," she said regally, "if ye won't, ye won't. Don't trouble to find an excuse."

"Don't be a goose!" said Peacocke affectionately. "There's something—Chloe!"

The appeal in his voice found an immediate answer, likewise a misinterpretation in Mrs. Fitzhugh's understanding. She softened at once into eager tenderness.

"What is it, Timothy, dear? Ye look worried. I'll forgive ye. If to-night's engaged, there's still to-morrow night. Mañana, ye know—mañana!"

Peacocke walked over to the window, hands in his pockets, lips curved to an abstracted whistle; when he came back, he faced Mrs. Fitzhugh squarely, secure in her liking, and openly anxious for her sharing of his secret.

"Fact is, Chloe," he said simply, "I'm married."

In an access of feeling, he turned his look suddenly back to the window, so he was not aware of the first naked result of his announcement in Mrs. Fitzhugh's uplifted face.

Slowly the color drained away from cheeks, and forehead, and curved, crimson lips. An alarming pallor settled in its place. The fine, thin nostrils fluttered with a sharply drawn breath, and the eyes between the thick, black lashes narrowed to a gleam of sapphire.

One tight-closed hand crept up to Mrs. Fitzhugh's breast, the other shut like a vise upon the back of the chair she had left.

There was a silence brutal and absolute, which Mrs. Fitzhugh broke presently, with a laugh:

"Timothy, dear—ye're jokin'!"

But she knew he was not.

"No," said Peacocke quietly, "it's true. This morning—to Janet Clay—we came out on the ship together."

In a lightning résumé of the situation, he had seen that the fact of his marriage to Janet—the suddenness of it, and all the attendant circumstances, barring her engagement to Gillespie—was bound sooner or later, through the ubiquitous newspapers, to become public property. With Chloe, therefore, for whom he felt all the impersonal affection of "auld acquaintance," he forestalled it.

Mrs. Fitzhugh gripped her lower lip in strong, white teeth, and turned imperceptibly, so that the light fell at her back. She laughed again, for which



"Come in!" he repeated, smiling. "Looking for something to read?"

some credit is due her. It was a light laugh, and worthy to be believed.

"You mean," she said, the barest trifle slower than her usual vivid speech, and now the brogue fell from her tongue entirely, "you mean—it was sudden?"

Peacocke nodded.

"She's wonderful," he said, with a touch of reverence. "Wait till you meet her. You'll understand."

"I shall be curious," said Mrs. Fitzhugh. "You were always so adamant, mi amigo—it would be a witch who could change you."

"She's all of that," he agreed.

Mrs. Fitzhugh drew on her gloves, which she had taken off when she sat down, and her voice strained suddenly on a question.

"This morning—after you left the ship?"

"Yes," said Peacocke.

"Where is she now?"

"At the Young—we'll stay there until I can put my house in order, so to speak. You'll come to see her soon, Chloe? I want you two to be friends."

"I've no doubt," said Mrs. Fitzhugh, "that we shall. Beautiful, of course?"

"No-o," said Peacocke. "She's not beautiful."

"You were always so keen on pretty women."

"She's got a soul in her face," he said curtly.

"I think I know the type," commented Mrs. Fitzhugh.

That was a delicate unsheathing of claws, but Mrs. Fitzhugh was suffering. The color came back in a splendid, feverish tide to her smiling face, and the lips she had bitten were once more crimson.

"She's young," said Peacocke. The reminiscent tenderness in his voice was a goad in the flesh of the woman before him. "Very young—and inexperienced. I've been thinking, while we were talking, that it would be a great thing for her, knowing you—a woman of the world—a woman older than herself—"

"How old is she, in Heaven's name?" cried Mrs. Fitzhugh sharply.

"She's twenty-five."

"I'm thirty," said Mrs. Fitzhugh. "And five little years, *mi amigo*, is not much. Twenty-five, for a woman, is nearer thirty than it is twenty."

"I dare say you're right," said Peacocke, "but somehow she seems so much a child."

"Is thy servant a dowager?" demanded Mrs. Fitzhugh, a little fiercely, for all her mocking smile. Her hands trembled.

"You're full blown," he elucidated thoughtfully. "You're a red rose of a woman, Chloe—more or less. And she's an adorable ivory bud. You know what I mean. I beg your pardon for talking so much rot. Anyhow—you'll come and see her. Tip her off to things she'll want to know—there's a good girl!"

Mrs. Fitzhugh gave him her hand in farewell.

"I shall be glad to," she promised, with more than a trifle of ambiguity.

From the doorway she added a postscript:

"Tis a great surprise you've given me, Timothy, dear. Adios! Be good!" "Always am," said Peacocke cheerfully.

"Marriage," said Mrs. Fitzhugh, "makes it inevitable."

She rang for the elevator with a steady hand, but, when it came, she stood so long, dazedly, before entering, that the elevator boy was moved to a raucous protest:

"Goin' down!"

"Quite so," said Mrs. Fitzhugh.

She entered and began the descent.

CHAPTER VII.

Three days after he had taken his wife to the hotel, Peacocke's home was ready, and Janet found herself a permanent guest upon its threshold.

The house stood somewhat back from the street, in a delightful isolation that owed much of its security to palms and ferns and the clear, feathery greenness of the algaroba, whose trunks showed black and slender tracery within an opalescent shade. There was a lattice along the eastern fence, and from this support buginvillea swung royal tapestries of purple and green; broad reaches of color that glowed upon Janet's restrained Northern sense with a vividness almost garish. The hibiscus hedges, starred with the flame of big five-petaled flowers, startled and allured her. Everywhere was blossom and leaf prolific. Begonias, rosy and white, banked the steps of the house. Great ferns stood in tubs beneath the palm trees. Across the velvet smoothness of the lawn, myna birds strutted with the imperishable impudence of their kind, and called to each other croakingly.

For the house itself, it was after the colonial fashion, long, and low, and white, with a pillared porch reaching its entire width, and a roof moss-green among the deeper green of the branches.

"What a lovely porch!" said Janet.

The place, just at the first, took her out of herself in a flush of wonder and delight.

Peacocke smiled with pleasure. He corrected her lightly.

"*Lanai* they call 'em out here. Like it?"

"It's perfect," said Janet.

She followed him through the rooms with an interest that quickened in spite of the apathy that had come, since the morning of her marriage, to be so deeply and so cruelly a part of her. It was not in woman nature to resist the fresh, sheer curtains at the windows, the bowls of flowers about the living room, the winding grace of the white stairway, or the elusive glitter of silver and cut glass within the coolly shaded dining room.

Upstairs she followed more slowly, while Peacocke opened a door and stepped aside for her to enter.

"This is your room," he said simply.

Janet nodded, inarticulate. She looked about her reluctantly.

It was a wide room, opening with broad windows upon a vine-screened *lanai*. The walls were papered in a delicate ivory, striped even more delicately with blue, and the furniture was white-enameled, from the bed to the little footstool that stood by a deep armchair. This armchair itself was cushioned with Delit chintz, and at the windows were curtains of the same quaint blue-and-white design. Ivory brushes lay on the dressing table; even the frivolous prettiness of the powder puff flaunted a sky-blue top.

"It is all beautiful," said Janet at last. She saw, wrongly as it happened, that Peacocke waited for her appreciation; and for all the innocent prettiness of the room, she felt herself trapped.

"Beautiful!" said Janet again, and touched the roses with indifferently tremulous fingers.

"It opens into the bathroom," Peacocke explained, "and it's all been done over in the last three days—a bit rushed, of course."

He flung open another door. The bathroom, white-enameled and nickel-

plated to a state of shining perfection, revealed itself.

"The room opening into the bathroom from the other side," said Peacocke gently, "is mine. Because of the servants, I thought it better to have it like this. Japanese servants are the devil for gossip. You don't mind?"

"No," said Janet, with a trifle of difficulty. The color crept up beneath her paleness.

"I shan't be at all in your way," said Peacocke lightly. "You've only to shut your door—bolt it if you like." He slid the little bolt easily.

Janet protested with a faint smile. Nevertheless, at the click of the fastening, she drew a long breath.

"I mean," he said slowly, "you're to feel that you can be quite by yourself at any time you choose."

He came back into the coolness of the blue-and-white room, and stood leaning against a window frame, one hand, as ever, in his trousers pocket, the other thrusting back his straight, black hair with a gesture oddly youthful in one of his contained, direct poise.

"Janet!" he said, all at once. "Don't you think you could be happy here?" His eyes questioned her.

"I don't think," said Janet, "that I can ever be happy—anywhere—again. I told you—that morning—"

Peacocke nodded. He eyed her gravely.

"I know. Never's a long time, though. You're only twenty-five—eh? You'll be happy long before you're old."

"I am old now," said Janet tonelessly. She thought she was. It remained an unceasing wonder to her that each morning's mirror showed her still ineffably removed from white hair and wrinkles.

"Thinking so's the best sign of youth," said Peacocke. He smiled at her unexpectedly.

"You're an adorable youngster—that's been hurt—that's all. You think the world's gone wrong for good. Some day you'll see it can't. It's too firmly placed. Things always right themselves sooner or later—eh?"

Janet did not answer. Secretly, she

resented Peacocke's assumption of elder wisdom. Much as she loathed her grief, strongly as she shrank from it, it had yet to her the dignity of reality, the tragedy of permanence.

"You don't understand," she said presently.

Peacocke frowned a little.

"I think I do. But I am hoping that time will be good to us." He picked his words slowly. "I am going to say it this once, Janet; then the subject lies fallow between us till you choose to return to it. May I?"

"Go on," said Janet. She did him the injustice of reflecting that, with or without her permission, he would continue.

"It's like this, then," said Peacocke. "We're taking a long chance, and either we win out—get our happiness—or we smash—in which case I'll see that you're released. But we're not going to smash from any fault of mine—if I can help it. You're as free in this house as if you were merely my guest. You are not to feel that you are hampered in any way by my caring for you. Be friends as we were on the boat, and don't be afraid that I shall annoy you with love-making. If the time ever comes when you feel that you would—like to be annoyed—I'll know."

"It's all so impossible," objected Janet nervously. "I don't suppose that any man and woman ever before—"

"Lots of them," said Peacocke succinctly. "Everything's been done before. I'm quite honest with you. I'm hoping to make you love me—ultimately. I'm no Platonist—I'm merely playing for big stakes. It's best to have a clear understanding—eh? Now you'll come and go in these rooms, feeling that they're your own—without any obligation whatsoever."

He took his hand out of his pocket and whistled a bar of a waltz, while Janet watched him in silence.

"We dine at seven, if you like," he said cheerfully. "Anything you don't like in the way the house is managed—for Heaven's sake, change! I think you'll find the cook pretty decent—and the maids. By the way—I've deposited

something to your credit at my bank—you can draw against it whenever you want money. I thought you'd prefer that to an allowance. The check book's on the table here."

"I can't take it," said Janet hurriedly.

Peacocke smiled.

"Nonsense! You'd take your half of the funds in any partnership. Please don't make me feel a brute about it. Suppose we have lunch now?"

His easy transitions from vital issues to the mere comforting commonplace of breakfast, lunch, and dinner confused and betrayed Janet's decisions.

After all, she considered, with a tang of bitterness, if she did not allow him to provide her with money from whence was it to come? She had hedged herself away from ordinary methods. Remained but the simple-appearing one of value received. Suppose she kept Peacocke's house as a woman should; that in itself offered a loophole. The laborer was always worthy of his hire. Servants to be overlooked, meals to be ordered—a thousand and one things presented themselves to her groping and eager mind. She calmed instantly to a sane appreciation of the justice of the thing, resolving on a service that should be worth its wage. Love, only, she denied with a shudder. For the rest, she could work in his house and be paid for it.

So she nodded suddenly, looking at Peacocke still a trifle fearfully, out of wide, honest eyes.

"There is a great deal I can—one could do—in a house like this—isn't there?"

"Do absolutely nothing that doesn't interest or amuse you," he returned, uncertain of her meaning.

"That is just it," said Janet eagerly, "if I can be any good to you—"

She flushed and stammered instantly beneath the consciousness of his feeling, but he himself only smiled.

"Any amount of good."

"Then I shan't feel as if I'd no right to things," said Janet.

"You'd be doing me an injustice if you felt that in any case," said Peacocke coolly.

Nevertheless, he understood her attitude, and was glad of it. To a large extent, it lessened the strain upon their future relationship. A certain amount of strain, he conceded to himself, was inevitable, but, by every means within his power, he tried for a speedy adjustment, a sort of naturalization of the extraordinary condition of affairs which he himself, with the conjunction of circumstance, had brought about. He considered, with some justice, that responsibility for the present situation rested largely upon his own shoulders. Janet, wrenched out of herself by shock and distress, had hardly been answerable for her actions. He considered that he had taken advantage of her agonized bewilderment. He had not actually coerced her, but he had opened a harbor to her storm-tossed mind, and she had drifted into it blindly.

He showed her where a hammock might be swung on the *lanai* if she so desired; straightened the pictures on the walls with a quick, careless touch, and stopped, thoughtfully, stroking his chin, before a miniature that hung on the wall, above a bowl of roses.

"This is my mother's picture," he said briefly. "You don't mind?"

Janet stumbled hurriedly among words.

"Of course not—why should I?—please, *please* don't suppose I would!"

"Come and look at it," said Peacocke. He added, when Janet stood beside him: "Pretty—wasn't she?"

The woman of the miniature looked past them serenely. She had a broad, low forehead over deep eyes, and beneath a straight, fine nose her mouth and chin showed consistently sweet. The picture betrayed an air of girlish dignity that was strangely appealing. No coquettish mockery lurked in the eyes, and when the lips had smiled, it must have been softly.

"She was beautiful," said Janet slowly. "Is she—"

"She died when I was a little chap," Peacocke anticipated the halting question. "I have no recollection of her. They tell me she was beautiful. Only

thirty when she died. Hard lines, wasn't it?"

A flush of sympathetic sorrow for the quenching of that long-ago flame of life took Janet swiftly. For the moment she forgot herself and put out a gentle hand to touch the small, gold frame.

"She looks so sweet and calm—as if she'd never be afraid—or furious—or silly—as if she'd found the answer to everything. How old were *you*?"

The question, with its unintentional interest, startled her when she had asked it. But Peacocke's quiet was reassuring.

"Three, I think—or thereabouts."

"It must have broken her heart to leave you," said Janet musingly. She was not thinking of the man beside her. Her swift-winged imagination had taken her back in an instant to that sweet, still-faced motherhood, and the little, little boy whose toddling, clumsy feet had had so early to learn their own way about an indifferent world. "And how she must have hated to think that you wouldn't even remember her!"

"It's been a big piece out of my life," he admitted gravely.

"My mother died when I was just fifteen," said Janet musingly.

"At least you knew her, then."

She nodded, sunk in some inner reminiscence.

"But I don't think she cared—frightfully—for me. *You* know—as some mothers do. We were totally ungenial. And I was an ugly child. She loved prettiness. I used to pray at night that when I grew up, I'd have a Grecian nose. I used to think that if you were grown up you were bound to be happy—and I was sure I'd never be happy unless I was beautiful. You see? Quaint reasoning—wasn't it?"

Peacocke smiled whimsically.

"Beauty is as beauty's done by."

"I know," said Janet. "I've seen pretty women sitting against the wall at parties, while plain ones didn't. I'm wiser now. It's charm, isn't it?"

"Something like that," he agreed.

"She must have had it," said Janet,

looking at the miniature. "Was her husband terribly in love with her?"

"My father, you mean? He was mad about her. He died ten years later—of typhoid. But the doctors said chiefly he made no effort to live. There are cases like that, I suppose."

Janet, fingering the roses in their silver bowl, fell suddenly back into the painful unnaturalness from which the sight of the miniature had lifted her.

"I suppose so," she echoed, in strained acquiescence.

Peacocke glanced at her keenly. His look and tone took no account of any alteration in hers.

"While I think of it," he observed, turning toward the door, "I'm going out to Haleiwa this afternoon—in the machine. Want to go? It's a beautiful drive. We can have tea out there—or supper, just as you choose. I think you'll like the mountains around here. However—don't, unless you like. Or if mountains bore you——"

"I'll be glad to go," said Janet.

She stood by the window, when Peacocke had gone out of the room, and stared broodingly across the *lanai*, down into the street. An occasional motor went by like a gigantic and swift-moving beetle, and at long intervals an electric car whizzed past. The sky was interminably blue, the *buginvillea* interminably purple. Scents and odors of strange tropical intensity came up to her nostrils. Her ears caught the faint *susurra* of the trade wind among the palms.

"God!" said Janet, on a note of appeal. A moment later, her mouth twisted into a smile of self-conscious bitterness. It had occurred to her that God—always supposing He heard and answered such wails as hers—might yet find nothing in her present state demanding intervention.

"He's good to you," she said drearily to herself—meaning Peacocke, not the Deity. "He's going to take care of you—and he lets you alone. What else do you want—poor little fool? He's a good man—isn't he? He's satisfied with your friendship——" But there the inner voice broke on a

jagged realization of friendship's inadequacies. "I'm lonely," said Janet to herself. She said it over and over again in a rather pitiful childishness. She even went to the miniature upon the wall for comfort, and stared at it hungrily.

"You're his mother," she told the proud, sweet eyes of the picture. "Tell me I needn't be afraid of him! It's such a hideous world—you can't believe anybody—you can't trust——" The recollection of one she had not been able to trust racked her afresh.

While she set her teeth upon her lower lip and drew long, shaking breaths having something approaching hysteria as a probable result, a knock agitated the silence of the closed door.

"Come in!" said Janet. She grew instantly quiet.

The white-paneled door emitted a small Japanese maid, and closed again.

"What is it?" asked Janet kindly.

The small Japanese maid wriggled with pleasure.

"Pretty soon runch," she announced painstakingly.

Janet puzzled without result.

"Boss say," the daughter of Nippon supplemented anxiously, "more better I speak missis—pretty soon runch."

Something in the soft guttural interpreted itself.

"Oh!" cried Janet. "Lunch!"

"Runch," agreed the little woman happily.

Janet laughed, and preceded the sliding, pattering footsteps through the doorway. In the hall below, Peacocke got up from a deep wicker chair at her approach.

"Hope you're hungry?" he said pleasantly.

"I think I am," said Janet.

It was really less a lie than she supposed.

CHAPTER VIII.

To some extent, and after a casual masculine fashion, Peacocke had forewarned Janet of Mrs. Fitzhugh's approach.

"Chloe's a nice, old girl," the forewarning took just at first the shape of

eulogy. "I think you'll like her. She's the widow of Michael Fitzhugh—old chap who owned a lot of land hereabouts. He's been dead five years now. Chloe's about thirty, I should say. She was twenty when she married him—twenty to his fifty-two——"

"Was she in love with him?" asked Janet naively; then twisted a soft, lower lip in scorn of her own absurdity. It was the sort of question she would have asked, and not retracted, a short ten days ago.

"Scarcely," said Peacocke, smiling. "She liked him well enough, I think—for what he gave her. He was besotted about her, absolutely. No-o—I don't think Chloe was in love with him. She's a sort of free lance in the emotions—good looking, magnetic, reckless, more or less. Spanish mother, Irish father—I doubt if you've ever seen the type. She's been a pretty good friend of mine now for a number of years. I like Chloe," he added thoughtfully. "I hope you'll like her, too."

"Is she in love with you?" asked Janet, playing with a bracelet on her slim left arm.

That question, too, she would instantly have desired to withdraw. The color flooded her face. Her eyes fell. But Peacocke answered it carelessly enough:

"Bless you, no! Nothing like that."

"I didn't mean to ask—I beg your pardon," said Janet stiffly.

Peacocke's glance searched her face for other than a surface meaning, and found none.

"It's all right," he said kindly, "why not?—I *was* singing her praises a bit. Well—she's coming to see you—in a day or so."

"She sounds rather interesting," said Janet, endeavoring to atone in some measure for her conscious awkwardness.

After all, though, interesting was scarcely the word for which, upon Chloe's vivid advent in the latter half of that same week, Janet found herself searching. Interest implies a degree of cool aloofness, a sort of demagnetized appreciation to which Mrs.

Fitzhugh's fragrant personality appeared but illy suited. Roses are not interesting, nor tropic moonlight, nor mangoes—for such as these another category obtains, no less flattering because a trifle warmer. Chloe's charm was not to be analyzed, much less to be laid away for reference. She exhaled a perfume of spirit, potent, if reprehensible, which made analysis a frank impossibility.

Janet found her, at first sight, a trifle overwhelming, a fact due as much to oversensitized reception on the one side as to exaggerated impression on the other.

Nevertheless, Janet played her unaccustomed part of hostess bravely enough.

"I am so glad," she said, smiling, "that you have come. Mr. Peacocke spoke——"

"My dear," Chloe interrupted gayly, "do call him Timothy, to me. I dare say he's told you—we're very old friends."

Janet blushed, much against her will, and loathing herself for so doing, because even the perfunctory use of Peacocke's name was difficult to her pain-sharpened sensibilities.

"Please take this chair," she offered evasively. "You'll find it more comfortable, I think——"

But Chloe waved it away, showing white, even teeth in a pretty grimace of self-scorn.

"Far too comfy—I know it of old. I daren't be so luxurious. Only a slim wisp of a thing like you—you're deliciously thin, by the way."

"Why, you——" said Janet simply. "You're not——" and stopped.

Her eyes dwelt flatteringly upon Chloe's slender length, the splendid shoulders showing beneath the sheer, soft gown, and the pride of the long, white throat.

"I am a slave," said Chloe mournfully, "a slave to slimness. I sacrifice everything I love best to do—I play tennis, which I abominate—I sit only in the straightest, most merciless chairs—and I give up potatoes—I—a daughter of Erin——"

The name as it left her lips became music.

"But why should you?" asked Janet, compelled to half laughter. "You aren't—"

"No," said Chloe solemnly, "but I may be—unless I discipline the flesh. I have a horror of fat people. There's nothing in the world so beautiful as a beautiful body—" she broke off, mock penitent. "There's my hobby for you—you'd have found me out, sooner or later. Don't let me be off on it again. Tell me, now—how do you like us? And isn't this house a jewel of a place?"

Janet moved a little restlessly beneath the double question. She sat, by some subtle maneuvering of Chloe's, which she had vaguely realized without being able to defeat, facing the afternoon light. For Mrs. Fitzhugh herself, a big hat, heavy with coral plumes, effectually shaded the languid eyes.

"Yes," said Janet at last, a trifle carefully, "it is—a very beautiful house."

"And Honolulu?" pursued Mrs. Fitzhugh; she registered a mental observation that Janet's approval of the house entirely escaped the personal element.

"Honolulu," said Janet, with a flicker of her old lightness, "is a coat of many colors, isn't it?"

"The Crossroads of the Pacific," quoted the other lazily. "That's what it's called, you know. It is a bit of a melting pot—American, Hawaiian, Japanese, Portuguese, Chinese, Spanish, Russian, German, British—" She told them off upon her fingers, nodding in amused scorn of the resultant hoi-polloi. "You're from the South, aren't you? I suppose the mixed marriages don't appeal to you, then?"

"How did you know I was from the South?" asked Janet curiously. Her smile, which came in spite of her, robbed the question of resentment.

"Oh, my dear girl!" said Mrs. Fitzhugh sweetly. "Your voice—those big, soft eyes of yours—it's plain as the nose on your face. I'd say Virginia—for a venture."

"Kentucky," Janet corrected. "Louis-

ville. But I've been in New York the last three or four years."

She returned Mrs. Fitzhugh's look with a shade of wistfulness. Janet was childishly hasty in the matter of loves and hates. Already a strong liking was growing up within her for the other woman's humorous poise; her veiled, half-mocking tenderness, and her little air of recklessness. Something gallant and unmastered in Chloe's bearing made strong appeal to Janet's cloistered instincts. Over and beyond this remained the fact that for almost two weeks there had been no other woman to whom Janet could speak, and she was of the type to whom feminine companionship is almost a necessity.

Not all Peacocke's unfailing consideration, therefore, not all his carefully sustained impersonality, his friendship which never impinged upon emotion, and his gentleness which held itself scrupulously away from anything approaching sentiment—not all of this had availed to still in Janet that first unreasoning sense of a trap. A trap into which she had gone with her two eyes open, perhaps, but, nevertheless, a trap.

Unconsciously, she turned to Mrs. Fitzhugh as to a sister in distress. It was a point of view that would much have amused the lady in question, had she known it. At no time in Chloe's somewhat varicolored and agreeable existence had the Conqueror Man been other than a source of instruction and delight. Even now, with Timothy Peacocke's wife in Timothy Peacocke's house sitting quietly before her, Chloe was not affected, visibly. She rose to heights of sudden intimacy before the faint, unspoken longing in Janet's eyes.

"You're homesick, poor child!"

Chloe fancied it was the name, the mere speaking of the word, Kentucky, that had touched a secret spring. It sometimes does.

"No—" said Janet. "I'm not—really." She warmed to the nearness in the other's voice, even though the shot had not gone home.

"So far away from everybody you ever knew—no wonder—and all of

us downright strangers to you! It's the lucky man Mr. Timothy is, that you'd come into a new land—eh? Just for his askin'—"

The soft touch of brogue vanished suddenly. Chloe had seen a look of contradiction, a flicker of mute, but poignant, rebellion upon Janet's face. Almost instantly that face reverted to a rather hopeless calm, but the cat in Chloe was awake and trying its claws. She leaned nearer with an air of exquisite confidence.

"Were you not frightened? Running off all by your lonely little self, to be married—the very minute you set foot in Honolulu? I never heard of anything so brave. Timothy told me all about it. How did you keep it a secret on board ship? I can't imagine—"

"Oh, people guessed," said Janet nervously.

"Ah! You meant to be married as soon as you got here—didn't you? Little sly-boots!"

"No—no; only then—that morning—" Janet hesitated, but more and more she thawed to the gracious camaraderie of Chloe's manner. She had been very lonely in a strange land,



"Isn't this Mrs. Peacocke?" he offered lightly. "How do you do?"

and here was a woman's hand on hers—a familiar refuge—a guileless sweetness in her straining ears.

"Faith!" cried Chloe softly, "the romance grows. Only that morning, Chiquita? Truly? You were coming out to teach, then, perhaps—Clever child!"

The strain of whimsy that ran like a golden thread through Janet's make-up betrayed her into the enemy's hands.

She blinked, making rainbows of an incipient tear.

"I couldn't teach a blind kitten. I don't know enough."

"Tis a wise man," Mrs. Fitzhugh

averred sagely, "who knows what he doesn't know. I might have guessed you weren't a pedagogue, by the look of you. But, *cara mia*"—she laid a wooing hand on Janet's arm, her lips curved to a sirenic sweetness—"what were your people thinking about? You're much too young and pretty to be going round the world alone. Why, there are wolves in the woods who eat little girls like you. Didn't you know it?"

"I'm safe enough now," said Janet, meaning to be bravely playful, but speaking more of bitterness than she knew. Being utterly off her guard, she added: "Beside—I wasn't going around the world."

Mrs. Fitzhugh's adorable sympathy received an added warmth, if possible. Her voice took on a shade of astonished pleasure.

"Oh, who is it you know here? Beggin! Tell me instantly! You little fraud! Letting me sympathize with you—in your loneliness. I'll never forgive you. You were coming to visit somebody. Any one I know? And Timothy stole a march on us—the dear vagabond! Who was it—eh? Ah, tell me, now—do! I know every man, woman, and child in the islands—that's worth knowing."

"I don't know any one—I was not coming to visit any one," said Janet perfunctorily. Her mind, arrested, caught and hung on one vital phrase of Mrs. Fitzhugh's careful nonsense.

"Just gypsyng around!" sighed Chloe enviously.

It was an explanation that offered a wide way out of difficulties.

"Just gypsyng around," said Janet, like an echo.

"Lucky girl! I only wish I could afford it."

Janet did not answer at once, by reason of a certain feeling of helplessness. She retained—an unusual virtue in a woman—an almost puritanic hatred of untruth, and lied, if she were forced to the wall, with a clumsiness that was its own best proof of lack of practice. Her silence, however, spoke with the

tongues of men and angels to Mrs. Fitzhugh's waiting ears.

"Tell me," said Janet, after a queer, little pause, in which Chloe dangled a small gold purse and smiled curiously to herself, "tell me—you said you knew everybody in the islands?"

"Worth knowing," corrected Chloe humorously.

Janet nodded, her dark eyes searching the other's face for curiosity or malice, or even an undue understanding. Chloe frankly returned the gaze. She evinced only a friendly interest, and Janet's courage mounted.

Why a certain question tortured her to be asked, she scarcely knew. No definite feeling, rather the morbid inclination to reopen a wound possessed her. She ventured, with an appearance of indifference:

"There was some one I knew once—on Maui—a man—I wonder if you've ever met him? Gillespie his name was. I never really knew him—" That much, she reflected, was nothing less than truth. "I met him in New York—three or four years ago."

"Gillespie?" Chloe repeated musingly. "Carter Gillespie?"

Watching, almost languidly, for Janet's indifference had been reasonably convincing, Mrs. Fitzhugh's sophisticated eyes perceived the clew leap into daylight. As if that name had been a lash, Janet winced. Instantly, she steadied herself, but Mrs. Fitzhugh had seen. To cover which she added airily:

"Nice boy, isn't he? He's on the Maui polo team—one of their crack players. You ought to let him know you're here."

"Oh, no!" said Janet hurriedly. She stumbled over an excuse. "I—I don't particularly care for him."

"Then don't—" Mrs. Fitzhugh advised at once. "Never bother with people you don't care for—the world is too full of a number of things."

She stood up, as Timothy's step crossed the *lanai* leisurely, and without haste.

"There's Timothy—eh?"

"Oh, please don't go," Janet begged

nervously. "I interrupted you—you were talking about traveling. You've been around a lot, I suppose?"

"Quite a bit," said Chloe, with an inscrutable smile. She responded easily to the imperative shift in theme. "I've gypsied quite a bit in my time—still—ah, Timothy, dear—I've broken in upon love's young dream, you see? 'The world is too much with us'—eh? I'll just be taking myself off—"

"Oh, don't go—there's a good girl," said Peacocke easily. He shook hands with Chloe, friendly fashion, and passed Janet with a smile, on his way to a chair.

"I begged her to stay," said Janet.

"Another time," Mrs. Fitzhugh denied them graciously. "Don't ask me, Timothy, dear—I've some people for dinner and bridge to-night."

She made a lingering adieu.

"Will you bring her to see me soon, dear boy?"

"As soon as is decent," Peacocke retorted cheerfully, "after this very formal visit."

"You'll come?" said Chloe to Janet, with a delicious air of appeal.

"I shall love to come," said Janet simply.

She gave Chloe her hand with an impulsive pressure.

For Mrs. Fitzhugh, when the door had closed behind her, she entered her waiting machine, and, laying strong hands upon the steering wheel, fled rapidly along the quiet street. As she went, she frowned above an intricate equation—the value of x in which was, so far, undetermined.

CHAPTER IX.

That night Mrs. Fitzhugh declined, with a nonchalant showing of favoritism, to let Jimmy Wilding play bridge.

"I want to talk to you," she offered in explanation. "Wait till they're well started in here."

"I'll be smoking on the *lanai*," said Jimmy, who was young enough to love mystery for its own sake, and Mrs. Fitzhugh for hers.

Nevertheless, when she came toward

him lazily some fifteen minutes later, her coral-colored gown roseate against the shadows of the long veranda, he got to his feet as if surprised.

"I'd forgotten how beautiful you were," he greeted her dramatically.

"An' that," said Mrs. Fitzhugh, "will do you no harm an' me a power of good. Sit down again, Jimmy. I'm lookin' for information, to-night."

"Political, religious, or social?" inquired Jimmy gravely.

"Aither—and naither," Chloe responded with equal solemnity. Her dimple flickered and disappeared. "Jimmy, tell me, like a good boy—what do you know about Carter Gillespie?"

"H'mph!" said Jimmy. "Why?"

"That's my pidgin—my pidgin entirely. I asked you a question, Jimmy."

Jimmy shifted uneasily in his chair. He regarded an unlit cigarette with minute interest.

"Mind if I smoke?"

Chloe made an impatient gesture of permission.

"Well—" said Jimmy. He consumed unnecessary time over tapping and lighting the cigarette. "What do you want to know?"

"What sort of a man is he?" Chloe enumerated concisely. "Where is he now? What do you know about him—eh?"

"Good Lord!" objected her reluctant informer curiously. "You never read the papers, I suppose?"

"Honolulu papers?"

"The *Advertiser*," said Jimmy grandiloquently, "and its more or less esteemed contemporary, the *Bulletin*—not to mention the highly conservative *Star*."

"Sometimes I do—sometimes I don't," Mrs. Fitzhugh admitted. "What's that to do with Mr. Gillespie?"

Jimmy drew a long breath.

"Sometimes you don't—that's obvious. Why, he was more or less in the public eye only a couple of weeks ago—you didn't hear of it?"

"Devil a word!" said Mrs. Fitzhugh intently. "Go on!"

"It's not a pretty story," he warned her.

Chloe's face, which bore for the moment something the look of a cat watching a mousehole, softened to a smile. She laid an indulgent hand on Jimmy's willing arm.

"My dear child—the Garden of Eden was not a pretty story, but it has survived—in various forms. I am faintly familiar with its outlines—*vamos!*"

"Oh, well!" said Jimmy, a trifle sulkily, "my dear maiden aunt—you may be familiar with this, then. Gillespie was in an accident—one night, a couple of weeks ago—car upset—somewhere round Diamond Head—man named Crowley killed—the rest got off with a few scratches."

"The rest?"

"A couple of half-whites—hula girls." Jimmy conceded the core of the matter grimly.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Fitzhugh. She mused for a moment in silence—putting two and two together, but finding as yet no way in which to cement the union.

"Funny, you didn't know," said Jimmy; "the papers were full of it, at the time."

"When was all this?"

"About two weeks ago—I remember I ran into Gillespie on the street next day—I had just left you—come to think of it. Remember my telling you Peacocke was back? And you rushed straight off to his office—about some sugar stock."

Jimmy grinned, with a boyish malice.

"That would be the day Timothy got back, then—eh?" Mrs. Fitzhugh ignored all lesser pleasantry; her eyes gleamed in the half light dangerously awakened. She felt herself hot on the trail of something she desired ardently to know. "And the papers were full of it, you say?"

"Well, rather," said Jimmy. "I wondered Gillespie had the nerve to show himself—big piece of court plaster on his left temple. Little boulder! He looked as if he'd paid for it right enough. He looked half dead with

fright—or something—I never saw a man so——"

"Does he live here—in Honolulu?" Mrs. Fitzhugh demanded absently. Psychologic analysis of Mr. Gillespie's condition only confused the scent that she was following. She contradicted herself before Jimmy could answer. "Of course he doesn't. He's on a plantation in Maui—eh? Comes down to play polo."

"One of the fellows in the office told me," said Jimmy leisurely, "that Gillespie was talking—coming over from Maui on the *Maui Kea*—about a girl. Said she was coming out to marry him, or something of the sort."

"Oh—a girl!" said Mrs. Fitzhugh softly. She set velvet-padded claws upon the word.

"Nothing to it, most likely," Jimmy assured her cheerfully. "Fellow like that'll say anything when he gets outside of a drink or two. Anyhow—that's all I know about it. Fellow that told me said it must have been a stall. He never heard anything more about the girl. He only remembered it because Gillespie got himself into the spotlight the day he hit town. Little cad!"

Mrs. Fitzhugh rewarded virtuous indignation with a pat and a smile.

"Do you suppose the girl was coming out—I mean, do you suppose he came down from Maui to meet her?"

"That's what this fellow understood," Jimmy displayed an awakening curiosity. "Say—what's it all about? What do you want to know for?"

"Nothing," said Mrs. Fitzhugh sweetly. "Nothing, mi amigo. Has he gone back to Maui, by the way—this disgraceful friend of yours?"

"He's no friend of mine," said Jimmy hotly.

"No-o——" sighed Mrs. Fitzhugh caressingly. "No—of course not! I am afraid, Don Jaime, that you are something of a Pharisee—no?"

Jimmy flung away the stump of a cigarette.

"There are some things," he remarked succinctly, "a fellow won't do."

"Quite so," said Mrs. Fitzhugh.

"But which are they? Deponent sayeth not. You like Kipling, Jimmy?"

"Never had time to read him," said Jimmy contentedly. He added, stretching his long legs to kick the railing gently, "What's Gillespie go to do with Kipling?"

"Mere correlation of ideas," said Mrs. Fitzhugh. She rose and stood against the railing, gracile and slim as one of her island palms.

"Don't let's talk about him any more—about Gillespie—horrid little beast!"

"I told you it wasn't a pretty story," said Jimmy, self-sufficient and reproachful.

"So you did," said Chloe. "I ought to have taken your advice—eh, Jimmy?"

Jimmy, while not quite clear as to the score on which his advice should have been taken, yet accepted responsibility gracefully.

"A man is bound to know more than a woman—about some things."

"Sure," said Mrs. Fitzhugh, "an' if he didn't, it's the silly world we'd be livin' in, Jimmy, boy!"

She led the way imperceptibly back to the drawing-room and the bridge players, distracting Jimmy's mind along the road by a well-ordered flow of delicate comedy.

Later, in her own room, before the mirror, with the last guest dispatched, and the house silent for the night, she dropped the mask abruptly.

A sort of cruel exultation tilted the soft, red corners of her mouth and narrowed the sleepy eyes. She leaned to her own reflection mockingly.

"You couldn't hold him," she whispered, "eh?" Then the Irish father came uppermost in that strangely blended personality, and the dimple twitched to a mirthless smile.

"You never had him," she said grimly, and turned out the light.

In another part of town, Janet fought equally for sleep. The palms outside her window rustled and stirred; the soft, cool dark lay close upon her eyelids, and sheer stubborn will force kept her body still. Nevertheless, she suffered a gnawing torture of restlessness.

Small noises magnified themselves into the terror that walks by night. The creak of a board set her quivering from head to foot.

Out of the shadows a hundred shapes evolved themselves, descending upon her with a vague and horrible slowness. Subsequently, the hour, the half hour, and the hour again rang across her disordered consciousness, inducing a new form of suffering—the inevitable pressure of time. She lay for centuries, anticipating each stroke, and sickened with knowledge of the next, when that was done.

When every nerve in her body ached with the continued strain of mental and physical hunger for rest, she sat up in bed, slipped to the floor, and switched on the light. The clock on the mantel showed half after two.

She drew a long, uneven breath, and picked up her huddled dressing gown from the chair beside the bed.

The gown was pink—something the shade of tea roses—a thing of crape, and flying ends of ribbon, and vaporous, lacy frills. When she had put it on, she looked, with the fluff of soft-brown hair about her shoulders, uncommonly like a little girl, flushed with sleep, and rather lovely. Only, Janet had not slept, and she was not lovely. She was merely one of those rare creatures to whom the disarray of the bedroom is infinitely becoming. She looked at herself in the glass with a wistful lack of appreciation—passed to a chair by the window, and took up a book.

Fifteen minutes slunk by unwillingly. At the end of that time, Janet stood up and laid the book aside. It occurred to her that downstairs in the library, upon the table, where she had left it that afternoon, reposed a magazine which all at once she ardently desired. Timidity held her back, but a desperate restlessness drove her on. She crossed the room, crossed the hall softly, and descended the stairs.

In the lower hall a light was burning. The house was still and soundless. Only the girl's soft-falling footsteps disturbed the sleepy air. The library lay at the foot of the stairs, opening

suddenly upon the left, and it was not till Janet stood in the doorway that she realized that there, too, a light burned steadily.

She would have retreated then, stealthily enough, sensing the reason of that light, but it was already too late.

From behind the table, where he sat, slouching wearily above a sheaf of papers, Peacocke looked up, startled. He was in his shirt sleeves, and the slight informality of dress lent him somehow an endearing and unexpected boyishness.

"Come in," he said cheerfully. No shade of surprise betrayed him. His look rested upon the slim, flushed girl in the doorway, upon the shimmering pink of her dressing gown, and upon her loosened, lovely hair, with an impartial abstraction.

"Come in!" he repeated, smiling. "Looking for something to read? What's the matter? Can't get to sleep?"

Janet hung fire, poising meanwhile, childishly embarrassed, upon the threshold.

"I forgot a magazine that I wanted. On the table—"

He fumbled for and found it.

"Here you are—the *Review*—eh?"

"Thank you," said Janet, a trifle awkwardly.

He held it out to her without rising, and she came, perforce, into the room to receive it. The light struck ruddy gleams of gold from her hair and softened her eyes to liquid shadow. She was conscious of the suggested intimacy of her garments, and the consciousness rosed her cheeks adorably.

Peacocke, however, presented an untouched and disinterested front.

"It's a bit warm to-night—eh? What do you like about the *Review*?"

Janet pleaded a fold of her gown with nervous fingers.

"The poems—and the editorials."

"There's an editorial this month," said Peacocke thoughtfully. "Won't you sit down?"

"Oh, no—I think not—thank you!" Janet denied in haste.

"Oh, do!—why not? You can't

sleep—I can't sleep—here!—let me make you comfy." There was no more personal intention in that pleasant voice than in the ticking of the clock on the mantel. Rather than seem prudish, Janet hesitated; rather than seem ungracious, she sank into the chair he pulled forward for her. It was a deep chair, of wicker, and cushioned subtly.

Janet leaned against its yielding softness, and was conquered.

"All right?"

She nodded, reluctantly submissive to his comradely air.

"That's good. Haven't slept at all to-night?"

"Not yet," said Janet evasively.

Peacocke shook his head at her smilingly. He stroked his chin with the fingers of one lean, cool, brown hand.

"That won't do."

"You weren't sleeping, yourself," Janet defended unwisely, and flushed at once, a growing scarlet.

"I was working." Peacocke lifted the sheaf of papers abstractedly and laid it back again. "I can't seem to get down to it before dark."

"What sort of work?" asked Janet daringly.

She settled herself closer in the cushioned chair, and pushed back the hair from her eyes. All at once, and to the horror of at least one-half of her, a mounting sense of delicious adventure invaded her consciousness. She was suddenly shamelessly pleased with the shimmer of her rose-colored gown. Her little foot, in its pink satin slipper, with the impertinent pompon on the toe, she drew back beneath the chair, then thrust it forth again to tap the floor. She lowered her eyes and folded her hands in her lap demurely, but under that shy exterior she had a feeling as if bubbles stole along her veins.

"What are you smiling at?" asked Peacocke suddenly.

She gasped and denied it.

"I wasn't smiling."

"I saw you," Peacocke accused relentlessly. His own eyes took on a quizzical acuteness.

"I was thinking," said Janet, and half of her held up invisible hands in agonized protest, while the other half pirouetted lightly on the way to destruction. "I was thinking——"

"Yes," he said gently, to hearten her.

"I was thinking," said Janet, "how awfully interesting and improper it is for me to be sitting here talking to you at three o'clock in the morning, in my very best pink frillies, without a chaperon."

No one but Janet could have achieved a bolt from the blue quite so innocently, and no one but Peacocke could have perceived quite so keenly the appositeness of the bolt in question.

It was, he somehow saw, a reversion to her old, untroubled naïveté, the sort of thing she might have said before the emotional cataclysm.

He looked at her, therefore, as he might have looked at a small, white kitten, with no more meaning, and smiled indulgently.

"Why a chaperon? We're married."

"Ye-es," said Janet. She wavered only for a moment. The little unfamiliar whip of adventure stung her a foot farther.

"Still—I don't know you—really. And you don't know me." Her mouth curved to a delectable promise of mirth. "It's—it's absolutely Gallic—like a novel."

"Little girls," he told her sternly, his own mouth twitching, "are not allowed to read Gallic novels——"

"I've read De Maupassant," she defied quaintly, her face momentarily the face of a naughty child, "and D'Annunzio, and George Moore, and Tolstoi, and Balzac, and Flaubert, and 'Three Weeks'!"

"Then you should have been spanked." His severity met her nonsense. "Not that I'd bar the last classic on your list. It's too silly to be bad. Sheer piffle!"

Janet nodded eagerly. Books took her out of herself at once.

"Badness, to be interesting, has got to be clever."

"And even then," he supplemented,

"it's not so interesting as clever goodness, because the latter has the virtue of paradox—you don't expect goodness to be clever—if you see what I mean."

The clock on the mantel struck the half hour resonantly, and Janet slipped to her feet, dismayed.

"By Jove!" said Peacocke, startled in his turn, "you *ought* to be in bed."

Janet dropped him a mocking little curtsy. Recklessly, she abandoned realities.

"Good-by, then!"

"Oh, only good night," he protested, in friendly fashion, that cost him more of effort than she knew. Janet's flushed face was impishly sweet, her adventurous softness hard for Peacocke's lips, and hands, and heart to endure and keep aloof——

Turning lightly, her look touched the scattered papers upon the table, and the light fell all at once like a mask from her face. She lifted a long, white envelope in fingers suddenly shaking, and held it out before her.

"This——" she said unsteadily. "He has been writing to you?—I recognize——"

"That," said Peacocke carefully, "is from Gillespie—as you see. He writes me on business, for the Maui polo team—— We play them, before long—— Nothing more than that—— like to see it?"

"No!" said Janet hurriedly. "No—no—thank you!"

She ran out of the library and blindly up the stairs. When she had reached her own room, she flung herself across the bed in an inexplicable passion of tears.

CHAPTER X.

After that first impulse of adventurous friendliness, followed, as it was, by swift reaction and a storm of secret tears, Janet came to look upon Peacocke with something of a saner regard.

Day by day she watched him going about his business, and the self-controlled coolness, the mastering poise of the man, bred in her inevitably a sort of reluctant liking. Peacocke, on his

side, was wise enough to remain at a distance, emotionally speaking. Upon matters of business, the discussion of casual things, the little talk of ships, and shoes, and sealing wax, he was always the pleasant companion, the likable comrade, whom Janet had found so altogether satisfying upon that momentous voyage. His keen appreciation came to her now, as then, with a sort of infolding comfort. He was at once stronger and gentler than she.

he who jestingly regretted his clumsiness.

For the clean strength, the humorous fineness, and the cosmopolitan breadth of him, Janet rendered an unwilling admiration. She could not live near him and fail to see that here was a man. Nevertheless, and unjustly enough, she had her moments of almost hating him.

Outwardly, she settled at once into a composure becoming any man's wife. If that composure was tintured largely



"I have a pleasant surprise for you," said Chloe, one hand on Janet's arm.

Beyond that, however, Peacocke did not set foot. His consideration, his thoughtfulness, his interest met Janet at every turn, but thereafter a blank wall arose upon which she could discern no writing of any legible significance.

He could not have taken a wiser course. Where tenderness would have repelled, indifference appealed. It set a spur to Janet's pride that this man, who had seemed to desire her so greatly, should now endure so casually her presence in his house.

When their hands touched in passing, it was she who flushed and started,

with rebellion, no one but Janet herself observed it. She was called upon singly and collectively by Peacocke's friends, and Mrs. Fitzhugh, in especial, developed a peculiar fondness for the house on Lunalilo Street.

There were bridges, and teas, and dinner parties in which Janet played perforce a gracious and receptive part, but over and under it all, she moved always within the consciousness of her strange relation to Peacocke, his inscrutable attitude toward her, and the hollowness of her rôle within his house.

"It's like taking money falsely—

something you haven't earned," she told him one night, in a flare of resentment. "These people think you're dreadfully in love with me——"

"Well?"

She stumbled hurriedly over that.

"They think I'm dreadfully in love with you—they make little laughing speeches about Newlyweds—they make opportunities to leave me alone with you. They watch us—approvingly. It makes me feel an—unspeakable hypocrite."

"You'll have to forgive 'em," said Peacocke lightly. "It's merely a fool attitude—and, my dear child, you've no call to feel like a hypocrite—our relations—yours and mine—are your business and my business. So long as we're satisfied——"

"Are you satisfied?" asked Janet, with a fierce little gesture of disbelief.

"Satisfied," said Peacocke quietly, "is a big word, and covers a good many conditions. Suppose we say I'm content with the course of events."

"I beg your pardon," said Janet, with one of her characteristic and sudden repentances. "I'm always being horrid to you."

Peacocke contradicted her briefly:

"Rot! You're no end of comfort around the house. Suppose I get the car, and take you up to the Pali tonight. Clear the cobwebs out of your brain. You haven't been there yet. Want to go?"

"I should like it most awfully," said Janet.

She fetched a coat and veil, in shamed acquiescence. Any protest on her part was apt to end that way.

The road to the Pali unrolled itself swiftly beneath the wheels of Peacocke's car. It was not long before Honolulu lay behind them, the streets a network of winking lights, while on either side the dark outlines of sudden hills shouldered vaguely against the sky.

"This is Nuuanu Valley," said Peacocke. He drove with the apparent carelessness of long habit.

Before them the road wound up a long grade around a series of curves

whose unexpectedness startled and allured Janet's big, watchful eyes. There was no great room to spare at any time. On one side of the car the mountainside rose, steep and overwhelming; on the other it fell away, a precipitous slope, with the throaty whisper of running water somewhere in the darkness at the foot of it. Beyond that, again, rose other mountainsides, forming a valley, narrow and deep, so that the road seemed to lie between two closing walls. Soft, slow-moving clouds obscured the moon. The air bore faintly the spicy sweetness of lantana and acacia.

Janet's pulses quickened to the darkness and the possible danger of the road. The mystery of the silent hills stole into her blood. She held her breath to listen for the water that murmured ceaselessly somewhere within that unfamiliar night.

"What is the Pali?" she asked, half whispering.

Peacocke explained briefly, rounding a turn that hugged the shadowy rock:

"It's a cleft in the mountains—you can see both sides of the island. The wind sweeps through—in big blasts. We're almost there, now. Like the road?"

"It's like something out of a fairy tale. There ought to be trolls and gnomes in the bushes," said Janet, quite seriously.

She leaned back, clasping her hands in her lap, with a sense of mystery deepening about her.

The car swung around a last grim shoulder of rock, up a little stretch of steeper grade, and rolled out upon a small, dark plateau, across which the wind swept furiously, edged with an eerie chill. At that moment the moon slipped from beneath a cloud, and the breath left Janet's lips in a gasp.

"Get out and look around you," said Peacocke almost eagerly.

To the north, a great sweep of valley and coast line lay far below them, black and silver, with the sea for a molten rim. Janet walked to the rail that edged the plateau and looked down. Hundreds of feet the cliff fell sheer, but a mere stone's throw away rose the

straight, dark walls of the mountains high above her head.

The wind wrapped her skirts about her, and blew the hair from her gleaming face. Faint shrieks of triumph lashed the dark, as if Valkyries rode upon the gale. The moon was once more quenched.

"Here—let me hold you," said Peacocke at Janet's ear. She felt his warm hand close upon her arm. She had almost forgotten him.

"Great, isn't it?" he demanded boyishly. "Hold on to the rail if the wind's too much for you. There was a battle fought here once—"

"Tell me!" begged Janet.

He had to put his lips to her ear to be heard above the wind.

"It was in the old days—Kalani was king of Oahu—a mere boy—probably a splendid creature, like some of those you see in the surf at Waikiki. Well—Kamehameha, of Hawaii, having conquered Maui and Molokai, descended upon Oahu—with all his war canoes. He marched up Nuuanu Valley—the way we've just come—you see? Kalani put up a good fight, but the invaders were too strong for him. He and his men were forced back—up the valley—into the mountains—up to the Pali. They made their last stand here, and when they saw it was no good—no hope—they flung themselves down over the cliff—rather than surrender—"

"Oh-h!" said Janet breathlessly. The sound was less speech than pain.

"That's history," said Peacocke. "You've seen Kamehameha's statue in the square in front of the palace. Remember? He conquered the island, of course. They tell wonderful tales of that battle. Kalani was only just married—a beautiful Hawaiian girl—and the story goes that she and her maidens watched the fight from the mountainside—up above us here—" He gestured toward the shadowy, jutting rocks. "When the women saw Kalani and his men forced backward—flinging themselves over the edge, they rushed down the mountainside, wailing, and flung themselves after—"

"Over the cliff—after the men?" asked Janet. Her voice quivered with excitement.

"Look!" said Peacocke, and drew her nearer the rail.

The cliff fell steep and jagged. Far, far below them lay the dark silence of the earth.

"Bones have been found down there," he told her musingly, "whole skeletons, even—Kalani of Oahu took four spears—in his body—before he went."

"Oh, think of the girl!" cried Janet unguardedly. "Watching the fight—seeing her lover lose! Seeing him fling himself over! She must have been crazed—with horror—and pride! Oh—it's too wonderful!" She put out a passionately appealing hand that caught Peacocke's fingers and clung there.

"Can't you just see it? It almost frightens me. Listen! That wind—it's like the women wailing up on the mountainside. Couldn't you almost believe that the ghosts of Kalani and his men were drifting around the edge of the cliff here—couldn't you?"

The wind raged over the little plateau, and the moon hung wanly white, a shred of cloud across its face. There was an air of tragedy, a faint, cold spell of bygone agonies, about the place.

"Ugh!" said Peacocke, and shook himself to hide a shiver.

"I keep thinking of the girl," said Janet, "Kalani's princess. Do you suppose—she loved him—very much?"

"The story says so."

Peacocke spoke very carefully, by reason of the little hand upon his own.

"I dare say she was mad about him," mused Janet, "quite mad. Doesn't it all seem horribly near, somehow—standing here? When she saw him wounded—saw him throw himself over—she flung herself down the mountainside, and followed him—of course. There was nothing else for her to do. She couldn't go on living after that—could she?"

"Do women love like that nowadays?" asked Peacocke quietly.

"I should," said Janet between her teeth, and drew a long breath. She was lifted out of herself by the wind that

beat in her face, and cried like women upon the mountainside.

"Should you?" asked Peacocke slowly.

He faced her, closing his fingers tightly upon her hand. His face showed stern in the moon-pale darkness.

"You'd follow a man—over the edge—out of the world—if you loved him—would you?"

"If I loved him—I'd follow him—barefoot—" said Janet. She twisted her hand, but he held it fast.

"I believe you," he said exultantly.

A sudden gust of wind swept her blindly against him, her eyes closing upon his sleeve, but, while she waited, helpless, to feel arms about her, lips upon her hair, she found herself set once more firmly upon her feet, and braced by a steady hand.

"This is a regular gale," said Peacocke coolly. "Suppose we get back to the car. You'll be tired out."

Janet obeyed in silence. She told herself that if Peacocke had taken advantage of her momentary proximity, she would have loathed him. As it was, she regarded him curiously, from under lowered eyelids, and with a certain incredible sense of rebuff.

Peacocke, however, gave no sign of comprehension until they stood beside the car. He spoke then with a touch of fierceness in his lowered voice, one hand gripping the door of the machine: "You thought I was going to kiss you? You were afraid."

"No—no—" she fended swiftly. "I only—"

"Yes, you did—I saw that plain enough. Well—I wanted to—badly. I'm not a stone. I'm mad about you. I can't get your eyes and your lips out of my mind ten minutes at a time. I go to sleep thinking about you. I wake with your laugh in my ears—the way you used to laugh on board ship. You haven't done much laughing lately, have you?"

Janet opened quivering lips to speak.

"No—wait—let me finish! I don't seem able to make you understand that you're safe with me. I'm not going to kiss you—believe that, will

you?—until you want me to. You go about perpetually on guard for fear of what I may do—I can see it—for fear that in a moment of passion I may force my emotions upon you. Will you do me the honor to believe that I have myself pretty well in hand? Will you? And will you do me the further honor to believe that the last thing on earth I want is your unwilling submission to my touch? I'm not going to kiss you until you want to be kissed. Understand, little Janet?"

"Yes," said Janet unsteadily.

The wind swirled madly about them, and soft, shapeless clouds blotted the moon. Only the lights of the car thrust long, white fingers into the dark.

Peacocke's voice deepened. It took on a husk like the hoarse, slow sweetness of a cello string.

"But if you did want to be kissed," he said unevenly, "if you did—however, that's another story, as our friend, R. K., says. Get in."

Janet laughed. She put frightened fingers to her lips, but the laugh filtered through.

"And if we were 'way, 'way back in the dark of the world," she offered daringly, "would you knock me down—and drag me off by my hair—unless I wanted—to be—kissed?"

"Most likely," said Peacocke. He laughed briefly in his turn.

"Do you suppose," said Janet, half under her breath, "that Kalani was like that—to his queen-girl?"

"The story is," said Peacocke slowly, "that they loved each other beyond belief. Will you get in, now?"

"Suppose," she defied him, with a trace of mockery, "I don't want to get in—just yet. I like the wind—I like the dark—I can hear the women crying upon the mountain yonder, and I see Kalani's ghost, there at the edge of the cliff."

"Nevertheless," Peacocke decided impartially, "I think you'd better get in. It's after ten, and this wind has an edge. You'll be taking cold."

He held open the door of the car suggestively.

"There's something coming up—wait

till it's out of the way—please!" Janet yielded meekly.

The lights of another machine flamed whitely upward, and the long whine of a Jericho horn crept out upon the air.

"The road's wide enough," said Peacocke pleasantly. Nevertheless, he waited, resuming his former quiet.

A second car rolled out upon the plateau, and presently disgorged three men upon whom the moon, capriciously clear for the moment, let fall an all-revealing flood of light.

It did not need the tallest man's start of recognition to enlighten Peacocke's ignorance. Already he had felt Janet's hand tighten convulsively upon his arm.

There was a pause, instinct with possibilities, in which two of the newcomers walked carelessly to the edge of the cliff, and stood looking over into the valley.

Then Gillespie swung recklessly forward, his hand outstretched, his blond head bared to the moonlight. The weak chin twitched in a bravado of amusement.

"Isn't this Mrs. Peacocke?" he offered lightly. "How do you do?"

Janet murmured something in reply. Her hands were icy cold, and her body trembled, but she controlled herself to the point of speech.

"I think," she said carefully, "you haven't met my husband? This is Mr. Gillespie—Timothy."

It was a brave effort, but it left her shaken, in a silence in which the two men nodded curtly, not offering to touch hands.

"I'm to have the pleasure of playing with—your husband——" said Gillespie. He lent the words an unpleasant distinctness of inflection. "Polo on Saturday. How do you like Honolulu, Mrs. Peacocke?"

Peacocke answered for Janet instantly, yet with a drawl that gave no appearance of haste:

"She finds it extremely interesting."

Janet kept silent, teeth set tight on her lower lip.

"Rather a change from New York," Gillespie insisted, his eyes on Janet's face.

"An agreeable change, however," said Peacocke coolly. He added, as the two men by the railing showed signs of increasing interest in the conversation:

"You'll pardon us if we say good night—it's a bit chilly up here."

"Are you cold?" asked Gillespie pointedly of Janet. His persistence verged on discourtesy.

"A little," said Janet. She bent her head in deliberate dismissal. "Good-by."

Peacocke helped her into the car, got in beside her, and started the engine.

"Good-by," he said formally.

Gillespie muttered a response and stood aside.

The car swung into the road and down the first dim grade.

Peacocke drove in silence, his hands moving unerringly among the levers. Presently the noise of running water, which had been lost on the higher levels, began again murmurously. The dark was odorous with acacia and lantana, but the wind died to the softness of a caress. There was no longer any wailing upon the mountainside.

When the lights of Honolulu blinked once more into view, Janet spoke, without apparent emotion of any sort: "You are going to play polo—against him?"

"Oahu plays Maui on Saturday," said Peacocke lightly. "Like to see the game?"

"Yes," Janet answered, "I think I should." She added uncertainly, after a moment: "I regret——"

"No need," said Peacocke, unperturbed. "Not at all your fault—no harm done, anyhow."

It was an unanswerable conclusion, but Janet rode the rest of the way home in a surprised and faintly resentful silence.

CHAPTER XI.

Upon the afternoon of the day following that ride to the Pali, Janet went to tea with Mrs. Fitzhugh. Chloe's invitations were frequent and urgent, and in this, as in most instances, Peacocke was specially included.

"I don't like tea," he protested, upon being asked.

"We'll put it in a long, tall glass, with ice and a straw," Chloe insisted alluringly, "and mint around the edge."

At which Peacocke looked relieved. "That's different, but I'll have to be late. I'll come in about half after five—eh?"

Chloe said half after five would be an admirable time. She insisted, however, that Janet come earlier than that. And Janet went.

Janet, with the passing of the days, had gotten back a little of her earlier self. She no longer brooded upon the thing that life had done to her, but it is doubtful if the reckless striving for indifference that obsessed and directed her was any better, in a final estimate, than introspection.

Chloe met her warmly, both hands closing upon Janet's small, cool fingers.

"Well—Chiquita! At last! I've been expecting you an hour. Will you take off your hat? And what a poem of a frock!"

Janet wore a pink, embroidered muslin, very soft and silken, and a wide straw hat with flat, pink roses around the crown.

She looked ingenuous and young—younger and more ingenuous than she really was.

"Just like a little ingénue," purred Chloe, not without a touch of malice. "Run back to your convent, my dear—this world's a wicked, wicked place, and only fit for earthy creatures like myself—and Timothy."

"I'm not really so silly as I look," said Janet gravely. "It's the nose. Turned up, you know. People always think if your nose turns up, that you don't know any better—no matter what you do." She had not missed the sting in the tail of Chloe's last laughing speech.

"Ah, not turned up!" protested Chloe sweetly. She quoted, with a finger on Janet's cheek, "Tip-tilted like the petal of a flower"—eh?"

Janet nodded and smiled, rather shyly. She followed her hostess across the wide, cool *lanai*, and into the dusky coolness of the living room, to where,

beside the tea table, a man rose somewhat nervously to meet them.

"I have a pleasant surprise for you," said Chloe, one hand on Janet's arm. "Here is the one person you said you knew in these islands—I expect tears of gratitude from you both, now—eh? Mr. Gillespie, do you give me the half of your kingdom or not?"

The stark astonishment in Gillespie's eyes acquitted him, even to Janet's confused senses, of complicity in the meeting. She steadied herself with a great effort, smiling, while cross seas of emotion, and resentment, and recollection surged madly through her brain.

Before Chloe, whom she somehow suspected not at all of any ulterior motive, she dared not let the situation get away from her handling.

"This is most awfully nice," she said, just a trifle more swiftly than was natural. The color stung her face, but her lips were steady. It was bravery of a sort peculiar to womankind—the bravery of tight places and lost causes. Janet was nine-tenths coward, physically speaking, but she could rise to an emergency as well as the best of them.

She put out her hand now, which was convincing but unnecessary, and allowed Gillespie to hold it for a second.

"I had no idea of seeing you—this afternoon. Isn't it frightfully warm! You're playing polo to-morrow—aren't you, Mr. Gillespie? And may I have some tea, Mrs. Fitzhugh? What fascinating little cakes!"

Mrs. Fitzhugh poured tea with lazy apologies, and offered the little cakes in extenuation of her forgetfulness. Her hands above the tea service showed a number of beautiful rings, mostly diamonds. She wore a thin, white gown, and about her bare throat, upon a slender chain, a rich old pendant of emeralds. The green of the stones struck green responsive lights from her eyes. Her faun's mouth tilted at the corners with an insatiable secret mirth.

"To-morrow—yes," she suggested, with a glance at Gillespie, who had not yet so much as spoken. "Maui plays Oahu. You must see the game. We're

very proud of our polo—aren't we, Mr. Gillespie?"

"They play a good game out here," said Gillespie rather heavily. What pride the man had left spurred him to at least a semblance of indifference.

Chloe nodded with a subtle hint of admiration.

"The men ride like centaurs—have you ever ridden together, you two?"

"Mr. Gillespie didn't ride when I knew him," said Janet, at once on guard.

Gillespie's evasion came more clumsily.

"Not much chance to ride back home."

"I suppose not," said Chloe, "and yet—there's Central Park, eh? Wonderful bridle paths through there."

Janet addressed Gillespie directly in an instant necessity for getting the lead into her own hands. Central Park as a topic of conversation had possibilities of disaster.

"Where do you play?"

"The polo field's at Moanalua—it's a peach of a field—on the road to Ewa," said Gillespie. His eyes and Janet's met for the first time above the question. A current of uneasiness passed between them.

"Timothy's playing," Chloe interjected, looking from Janet to Gillespie and back again with sleepy-lidded eyes. "Let me take you out in my car, Chiquita. Do now! He'll trust you to me. There'll be two men at least that'll ride the harder for your lookin' on—eh, Mr. Gillespie?"

"Two—at least," Gillespie acquiesced. He smiled sardonically, but Janet refused to meet his eyes.

"Thanks, very much," she said evenly. "I should like to go. And might I have another little cake?"

Over Chloe's indulgent look of response, an inattention crept and deepened. She stood up swiftly.

"Forgive me, will you, both? There's the telephone. Matsumoto's a brother of a boy. He'll never answer it if it rings till doomsday—adios! I'll be back—"

She went hurriedly, and left silence behind her.

Janet spoke first, holding hard to her smiling poise:

"Mrs. Fitzhugh is a very attractive woman—isn't she?"

"Is that all we've got to talk about?" Gillespie demanded. He made no pretense at commonplace. The mask dropped at once, and, startlingly, revealing a face flushed with eagerness, lips unsteady with emotion.

"Except for that—and things like that," said Janet slowly, "we can have nothing to talk about—nothing at all."

He refused to see her meaning.

"Don't play with me—I've had my punishment, Janet—"

"Will you please not talk about it?" said Janet steadily. How far that steadiness might stand her she doubted, in a growing wretchedness.

Gillespie leaned nearer. He set his cup and saucer back upon the table with a little noise of silver upon china.

"I've got to talk about it," he insisted ardently. "I understand. You're giving me a chance. You wouldn't have let me see you here to-day—unless you—"

Janet drew back in her chair, her eyes widening childishly with something that was very near fright, her lips parted dryly.

"I never dreamed—" she said at last. "You must be mad—"

"I know, I know—" Gillespie thrust her denial aside as a matter of course. "I understand. This Mrs. Fitzhugh's a friend of yours. She managed it. You weren't supposed to know—I'm not supposed to know—"

"Hush!" Janet begged faintly. "Please hush!"

Gillespie cast a reckless glance around the room.

"Nobody's going to hear us. She won't come back till I've had a chance to talk to you—I saw that when she left us like this. She's a good sort. She's strong for you, Janet. My little darling—"

"Hush!" said Janet again sharply. She put both hands with a gesture of shame to her burning cheeks. "What is it you think? I tell you, you're mad. You can't possibly believe—"

"You can't blame me," he told her, with a laugh, nervously elate, "if I'm almost out of my head with happiness. I saw it at once. The minute she said I was the only person you knew in the islands. Pretty clever, isn't she?—to let me know without giving herself or you away. Janet, you're an angel from heaven. I didn't deserve another chance. But you'll never regret it. I swear you won't. I will——"

"Will you tell me what it is you mean?" asked Janet. She sat quite still, but her two hands clasped each other hard, and she looked at Gillespie with a curiosity that should have warned him.

Gillespie, however, went blindly on:

"I knew last night—the way you looked—the way your voice sounded—I knew you hadn't forgotten me. I knew you hadn't gotten over caring. But I never once hoped for anything like this——"

Janet stopped him abruptly with eye and hand.

"Anything like what?"

"Letting me see you—so soon. Giving me a chance to——"

"You think I knew you were to be here to-day?"

Even to Gillespie's infatuated consciousness, the scorn of look and tone went home.

"Yes," he said stubbornly. "I do."

"You think I—managed——" Janet framed the word with shrinking.

Slowly, beneath her unmistakable disdain of the whole tangled situation, Gillespie turned sullen.

"It looks rather like it—doesn't it?"

Janet twisted her fingers tighter. She looked at him out of wide, dark eyes,



"Timothy, I love you—won't you please wake up?"

from which the childish expression had momentarily disappeared.

"What did you think I wanted?"

"You don't care for that man——" Gillespie made a vehement beginning. "It's impossible—it's not natural——"

"And what then?" Janet deduced immovably.

He tried to put his hand upon her arm, but she motioned him silently away. Her small, pale face was inscrutably quiet.

"There's such a thing as divorce," said Gillespie huskily. He looked at her with redoubled hope. "We can be happy yet, Janet. Leave it to me——"

"That," said Janet, "is what you thought I was giving you a chance to say to me—isn't it?"

"It certainly is," said Gillespie.

Quiet fell upon the room unexpectedly.

The lacy curtains at the windows fluttered in the trade wind, and a bowl of gardenias upon the window shelf gave forth a heavy perfume. Shadows filled the corners, but through an open door

facing upon the west, the fires of sunset burned, translucently golden.

Suddenly Janet rose. She stood with her head flung up and her hands close-linked before her. Her face was very white, and her eyes were very dark. Her voice, when it came, was curiously distinct.

"I was never so ashamed," she said slowly, "I was never so hideously, helplessly, sickeningly ashamed—in my whole life long. Will you tell me what I have ever done that you should dare to think a thing like that of me?"

"Then you didn't know?" Gillespie accepted stupidly.

Janet drew a long breath and closed her eyes. Presently she opened them again.

"I've been a fool," she said, "but not that kind of a fool. I play fair. I'm Timothy Peacocke's wife now. I don't manage—or give chances to any other man. I'm honest—you know it."

"Too damned honest," muttered Gillespie. He added sulkily: "I beg your pardon."

"I can forgive you," said Janet, "for swearing at me. I can't forgive you for thinking anything so unjust—so altogether abominable—"

Gillespie stood up and rested one hand on the back of the chair he had been sitting in. His elation had faded, leaving him deeply resentful of what he conceived to be a trap.

"What was I to think?" he suggested, with the merest trace of a sneer. "Your friend, Mrs. Fitzhugh, takes this sudden fancy to me—begs me to come to tea this afternoon—after I've been here fifteen minutes or so, you come in—she evidently expected you—eh?"

"I tell you," said Janet fiercely, "it's absurd! It's worse than absurd—it's cruel! I didn't know that Mrs. Fitzhugh had ever met you—I didn't know that you were coming here this afternoon. You must believe me! I will not have you think that I arranged this! It shames me—unspeakably—I can't bear it!"

To her incredulous horror, she felt suddenly a stinging beneath her eyelids. A painful fullness obstructed her

throat. One moment she fought desperately for coolness and control, then the muscles of her face quivered past all concealment, and, with a strangled sob, she buried her face in her hands. Like a fair majority of her sisters, Janet, in moments of anger, always succumbed to tears. It is a phenomenon that rarely explains itself, however, to the masculine consciousness.

Gillespie's sullen resentment melted into an eager compunction.

"Don't, Janet! Don't!" he begged tenderly. "Please, little girl— Look here! Don't, now—will you—"

He would have put his arms about her, but she eluded him somehow, shaken, as she was, with sobs.

It was upon this misleading moment that Chloe chose to appear in the doorway with Peacocke at her heels.

"Did you think I was lost?" she demanded lazily. Then her quick eye compassed the situation. Her face smoothed itself to a suitably dismayed surprise, but the red mouth lifted irresistibly at the corners.

"Here is Timothy—come for his tea," she announced on a note of obvious warning, and stood aside that Timothy might so much the better see into the growing shadows of the room.

No one spoke at first. Gillespie because he would not, Janet from sheer panic-stricken inability to form an articulate word.

It was Timothy who came at last to the rescue. He crossed the room to the tea table, and stood there, smiling, one hand sunk deep in his trousers pocket, the other quite casually engaged in the selection of a little cake.

"Hello!" he said. "How-do, Mr. Gillespie? I was promised something to drink, Chloe. Something in a long, tall glass, with ice, and a straw, and mint—eh? Do I get it?"

"Does virtue get its own reward?" mocked Chloe.

"Then fetch it like a good girl," said Peacocke.

When Chloe had gone, reluctantly enough, he turned on his heel, facing Janet's uncertain calm.

"Has Mr. Gillespie been annoying you?" he inquired coolly. He silenced Gillespie's half-hearted bravado with a look. "Eh—Janet?"

"No," said Janet unsteadily. She spoke with difficulty, and she added, rather pitifully, after a moment, "I think I should like to go home—if you don't mind."

"Glad to," said Peacocke; "just a minute!"

He stood in silence, frowning a little to himself, till Chloe's footsteps sounded in the hall.

CHAPTER XII.

"See, Timothy—yonder!" said Mrs. Fitzhugh. "On the chestnut. *Madre de Dios*—what a man it is! Look at the shoulders of him! There's your little friend, Gillespie—just mounting. Can you see, Chiquita?"

"I see," said Janet coldly. Mrs. Fitzhugh's candid appreciation of Timothy's shoulders jarred somewhat upon her already unsettled sensibilities.

"Rain coming in on you?" inquired Mrs. Fitzhugh abstractedly. She leaned forward in the machine, eyes upon the field, drawing her own coat closer about the throat.

"Thank you—not in the least."

"Rotten weather," said Mrs. Fitzhugh. "Slippy for the ponies. Somebody'll probably get a nasty spill before they're *pau*."

"Before they're what?"

"*Pau*—finished—Kanaka word. Will you look at that, now! The man must be losing his senses——" She turned a fleeting glance on Janet. "You don't understand the game though—— Too bad!"

"I never saw it played before," said Janet.

She leaned back in her seat beside Mrs. Fitzhugh, and looked out upon the field with eyes whose mist was not all rain. The chill of the day depressed her.

Like some great, natural amphitheater, the sides of the mountains circled the polo field. North there were only foothills, but south the steep, dark

slopes upreared themselves behind veils of rain that shifted, and swayed, and hung grayly close at the will of the wind.

The sky was a sunless reach. Even the green of the turf blurred beneath a steady drizzle that rose intermittently into a sweep of silver spears. At the top of a flagpole the Stars and Stripes hung limply, a slender blotch of color against the clouds, but on the field the silken shirts of the players gleamed through the grayness like flowers.

Oahu's blue and white, the softer yellow and black of the Maui team flashed, and tangled, and glowed. There was a rush of hoofs, and the sharp, clear click of mallet on ball. Like the wind from the mountains, the riders swept over the field. Once in a while, a man swung out of the mass and rode madly ahead with the pack at his heels, but, for the most part, it seemed to Janet that there was only a purposeless confusion, blue and white, and yellow and black blurring and blending in a mad enlacement, out of which came always that small, sharp click; then a new confusion, and a yet madder chase.

She could not at first distinguish Peacocke. There were other chestnut ponies, with other riders, and at that distance faces failed of recognition. Gillespie, however, by reason of his mount, a gray pony, flea-bitten, and very fast, she discovered more readily.

Between times, she cast a curious glance down the road that circled the field. Everywhere were automobiles. Side by side they stood, like a concourse, Janet reflected, of large, unwieldy bugs, and when a point was made for Oahu, horns and whistles testified in a great gust of crazy sound to the undoubted enthusiasm of the occupants.

Mrs. Fitzhugh kept up a soft, broken thread of comment, her eyes never leaving the field, her hands, in their driving gauntlets, restlessly grasping the wheel.

"Oahu's playing a jewel of a game, to-day—look out, Timothy, dear! Ah-h! That's the boy! Raining hard now—eh? I'm thinking we'll need our skid-

ding chains going home, Chiquita. I don't like your friend, Gillespie's, game. Too close. Missed it—the brute! Ah-h—good!" She set the horn of the car going madly.

"Why do you say *my* friend, Gillespie?" asked Janet, suddenly trembling with anger.

Mrs. Fitzhugh spared a moment from the field for surprise, and something nearly approaching mockery.

"Faith, if he isn't your friend——"

"You asked him to meet me yesterday?"

With an effort, Janet achieved comparative commonplaceness of look and tone.

"I thought you'd be pleased," Mrs. Fitzhugh admitted meekly. A different expression entirely lurked in the tail of her eye.

"On the contrary, I dislike him," said Janet.

"I thought you told me," Mrs. Fitzhugh averred, with illimitable innocence, "that he was the only soul you knew in the islands. I fancied from your tone—forgive me, Chiquita! I never once guessed——"

"What do you guess now?"

But Janet was no match for the widow of Michael Fitzhugh.

"My dear," said Chloe softly, "you should have confided in me. I'll see that the creature doesn't bother you any more. These bygone suitors—they can never stay buried—eh? I know how it is, meself——"

"I don't know what you mean," said Janet, helpless as a mouse in a trap.

Chloe's eyes not inaptly suggested a feline in waiting.

"Faith, then—I don't know what *you* mean—at all, at all! Why shouldn't you want to see him?"

"I didn't say——"

"He's a bit of a talker himself——" Chloe suggested sweetly. "We're missing the game, Chiquita—look yonder! Rain again—and not enough blue in the sky to make the Virgin a veil—Come on, Timothy, dear! Good boy! Good boy!"

The clamor of horns and whistles

broke out afresh from the motors around the field.

Janet put the hair away from her eyes with chilly fingers. Her heart ached dully with a new fear. There was something in Chloe's manner that pricked through the veil of friendliness. A knife-edged antagonism touched the soft, Celtic drawl with ice. Janet, who had lain awake the greater part of the night, suffering acutely the shame of that interview with Gillespie, was quick to see and hear.

"*Madre de Dios!*" cried Chloe fiercely. "That was close work!"

The tumult of horns awoke again.

Janet watched with straining eyes. Her thoughts drifted dully.

"I can't stand it—I want to go back. I'll ask him—I'll tell him it's no use my trying. I want to go back to New York. I can work—I did it before. He'll have to let me go—he'll have to——"

"Look at Timothy! Look!" said Mrs. Fitzhugh sharply. Wild with the exultation of victory, she forced her field glasses into Janet's hands.

Janet put them to her eyes. All at once, leaving the mass, Peacock revealed himself. His dark head showed clearly. His silk shirt clung like a second skin to his splendid shoulders. He rode like an Indian, one arm drawn back, poising his mallet for a swing.

One breath-taking moment he led the field, then the press closed in about him crushingly, and Janet screamed.

In that chaos of honks and whistles, a scream did not carry far.

"The gray pony," she gasped. "Carter—I saw him——"

"Gillespie? You think he's hurt?" exclaimed Chloe. She flung Janet a look of comprehensive contempt before she snatched the glasses to her own eyes.

"I saw him!" said Janet faintly. She stood up in the machine, with both hands pressed tight above her heart, the breath coming short between her parted lips.

All about them the madness of sound shrieked, and whistled, and screamed its fierce applause.

The little group of riders in the field stirred and bunched again. One or two dismounted. People began to feel the chill of trouble. The noise lessened and tapered off. A man in a long overcoat trotted across the field in the rain.

Chloe, who was watching through the glasses, uttered a brief exclamation:

"That's Doctor Wales."

"Oh, God!", said Janet very softly. Her lips barely moved.

The players still clotted in the center of the field separated slowly. One of them led a riderless horse. Doctor Wales and a second man, who had run out from the side lines, lifted a limp figure and bore it off with the short, careful movements of men carrying a heavy burden.

The captain of the Oahu team walked beside Doctor Wales, leading his horse and gesticulating earnestly.

A stir of excited horror ran through the watchers in the machines.

"Why, there's Gillespie—on the gray pony!" cried Chloe suddenly and sharply. In another moment she dropped the glasses and turned with the swiftness of a cat.

"It's Timothy! Mary in heaven! You——"

"Carter did it—I saw him——" Janet's face was whiter than paper, her voice a note of agony. She faced Chloe superbly. "Stay where you are—he's mine—I'm going to him——"

She would have left the machine and gone out into the rain, but for the savagery of Chloe's hand upon her arm.

"Sit down," said Chloe between her teeth. "You little fool! With all of Honolulu watching you."

The machine quivered and started forward under the hand upon the wheel.

Janet sat still and waited. Her heart thudded chokingly within her breast.

Out upon the field the game began again, with a new man in Peacocke's place. The long line of automobiles signaled its relief by a weird cacophony of applause. The rain still fell upon the mountains, and less heavily upon the scarred, soft green of the turf.

At a curve in the road that led wind-

ingly around the field, a man who recognized Janet as Peacocke's wife called reassuringly to Chloe:

"Only knocked out, Mrs. Fitzhugh. You'll find 'em in the house at the end of the field."

"He'd say that, anyhow," said Chloe grimly. She opened a lever a trifle wider, and the car skidded along the sodden track.

Janet did not speak. She set her teeth into her lower lip, and her nails into the palms of her hands. When the car stopped at the house the man had pointed out, she was on the ground before Chloe could touch her. A man who stood in the doorway came forward to meet her. It was Jimmy Wilding. He had met Janet only once before, but her littleness appealed to his protective instinct.

"Tim's not much hurt!" he told her instantly.

"I want to see him," said Janet.

"Just a little while—he——"

"I want to see him," said Janet again. Wilding let her pass.

To Chloe, following more slowly, he explained:

"He's not conscious yet, y'know—got a crack in the head—when his horse fell——"

"I'm going in," said Chloe.

But Janet met her in the doorway of the room where Peacocke lay. Janet's eyes were like a flame uncovered. Her speech was primitively simple.

"Go away," she said, very low, but quite distinctly. "I'm going to take care of him—he's mine."

The doctor beside the couch did not hear, but Wilding heard. He stood just behind Chloe, and Chloe had forgotten his existence.

"I know," said Janet. "I understand now. Will you please go away, at once?"

Chloe went—having no choice. In turning, she encountered Jimmy Wilding's honest and open-mouthed dismay. It was a sight that touched the Spanish mother to fury, but the Irish father saw the humor of the situation, so that, while Chloe's eyes slew Jimmy, her

dimple came out and dared him to credit his own ears.

"Faith," said Chloe, "if ever I play cat's-paw to take other people's chestnuts out of the fire, again!"

Jimmy drew a long breath.

"I knew it must be something like that," he said relievedly.

Janet, however, closed the door and went back to the side of the couch where the doctor was standing.

"I think there's nothing wrong, really," said the doctor, in a guarded voice. "Just stunned—most likely."

"How long?" asked Janet, in a whisper. Her eyes implored him.

"Oh—any minute now——" said the doctor. He wiped the blood from a long scratch on Peacocke's cheek.

Janet all at once dropped down upon her knees beside the couch. Peacocke's hand lay nerveless at his side, and she touched it with her lips.

"I love you," she said, for any one to hear who listened. "I love you—I love you—I love you——"

The doctor walked over to the window and stood looking out into the rain. To his great relief, he heard now only an indistinguishable murmur. He was a canny Scot, and shy of the emotions.

To Janet, kneeling beside the couch, however, the doctor was one with the other furnishings. She did not even see that he had moved. She leaned above Peacocke timidly, and circled him with her arm. She touched her soft, warm mouth to his cheek, and whispered in his ear:

"Timothy—Timothy Peacocke—I love you—won't you please wake up? Won't you please open your eyes? I love you—I love you—— This is Janet—this is your wife—Timothy—oh, Timothy—Timothy!"

She did not cry, strangely enough, but her breath came short, and her eyes were wide with fear.

"I love you," she said, over and over again, into his ear, as if the fact alone had power to rouse him. "Timothy—listen—I love you!"

And suddenly Timothy opened his eyes.

Janet's face was hidden upon his sleeve. She stumbled on between dry, pitiful, little sobs:

"Timothy—wake up—won't you, please, wake up?—Timothy—— Oh, God—why doesn't he open his eyes!"

"They're open now——" said Timothy, rather stupidly.

Sight, and sense, and sound came back to him fast enough. He got to his feet a little gropingly, and stood looking at Janet's face.

"Just before I opened my eyes," he said slowly, "what were you saying?"

When Janet did not answer, he came nearer, looking down at her doubtfully.

"Were you saying it? I can't quite——"

"Yes," said Janet recklessly.

"Will you say it over again?" asked Peacocke.

She shook her head.

Peacocke put a hand to his chin, stroking it carefully.

"I remember—I must have gotten a pretty stiff crack. Frightened you—eh? I won't take advantage of your excitement. All right."

Then, quite suddenly, and without warning, he gave himself the lie. He caught Janet in his arms in a hold there was no withstanding.

"Say it again! I heard you. Say it again!"

Janet said it again.

"Do you want to be kissed? Yes?" he insisted huskily, and divinely abandoning all pretense, Janet lifted her lips. She did not pretend to explain to herself the miracle that beat in all her pulses.

She was crimson and breathless when Peacocke let her go, and Peacocke himself was rather white. She held him away from her bravely.

"It was Carter Gillespie—did you know?"

"I have a hazy impression," said Peacocke, frowning, "that just as I went down—eh?"

"I saw him through the glasses," said Janet, shuddering. "Nobody knows——"

"Dirty little cad!" said Peacocke. "God bless him!"



THE TROUBLE SEEKER

By Edwin L. Sabin

I AM an old man, and full of troubles; and the most of them never happened."

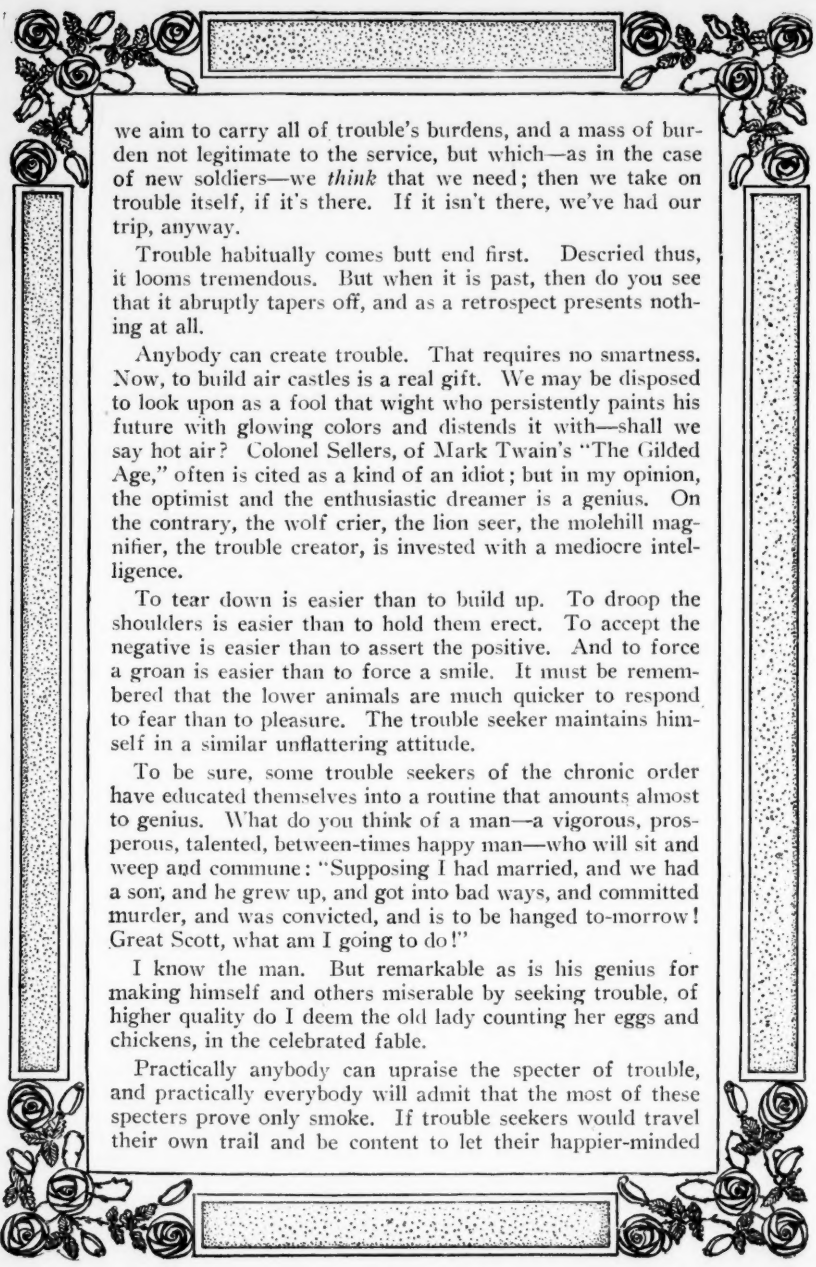
This is the sentence hanging upon the wall of a doctor's office, as comfort to his patients. Evidently he is a very honest doctor, for the potent reminder is liable to deprive him of that lucrative class of patrons termed hypochondriacs—the imaginary sick. Physical maladies, like other troubles, may be imaginary. Nevertheless, the sentence is a bully good message. Frame it in your mind and take it home with you, as I did.

Counting one's chickens before they are hatched is a treacherous blessing, but to count one's ravens before they have roosted is a decided curse. It is a blight, affecting not only oneself, but one's innocent, worthy associates.

Many persons reckon their troubles as a green hunter reckons rabbits—by the tracks in the field. One rabbit has made all the tracks, and he may not be in the field, anyway; but the hunter confidently anticipates to be loaded down. So the trouble seeker sees trouble in every trace; there is before him a very labyrinth of tracks and omens, and trouble is behind each bush and around each turn; and, after having fearfully traversed the covert, the trouble seeker is astounded to know that trouble is not there!

However, he is not especially relieved. Another danger zone lies adjoining, and, expectant, the trouble seeker steps into that. He doesn't like trouble—but his mind is set upon it, and he won't be happy until he gets it!

Probably seven-eighths of the worry lines upon the human visage are false alarms. The most of us are able to handle trouble when it actually arrives; the tussle strengthens us—leaves us abler, larger, sweeter. That which saps and kills is the useless preliminary; after we have marched fifty miles to meet trouble, we are in poor condition to manage him. Our reserve force is depleted. For those fifty miles



we aim to carry all of trouble's burdens, and a mass of burden not legitimate to the service, but which—as in the case of new soldiers—we *think* that we need; then we take on trouble itself, if it's there. If it isn't there, we've had our trip, anyway.

Trouble habitually comes butt end first. Descried thus, it looms tremendous. But when it is past, then do you see that it abruptly tapers off, and as a retrospect presents nothing at all.

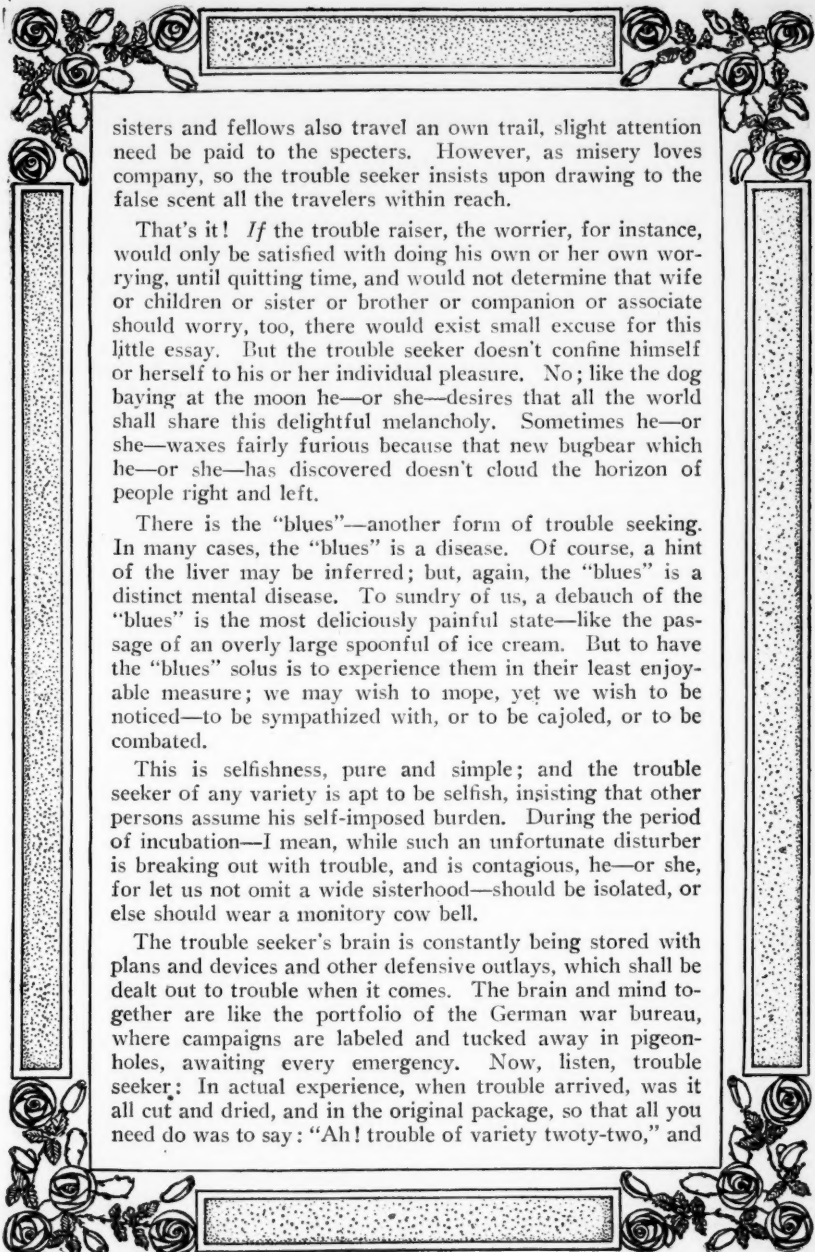
Anybody can create trouble. That requires no smartness. Now, to build air castles is a real gift. We may be disposed to look upon as a fool that wight who persistently paints his future with glowing colors and distends it with—shall we say hot air? Colonel Sellers, of Mark Twain's "The Gilded Age," often is cited as a kind of an idiot; but in my opinion, the optimist and the enthusiastic dreamer is a genius. On the contrary, the wolf crier, the lion seer, the molehill magnifier, the trouble creator, is invested with a mediocre intelligence.

To tear down is easier than to build up. To droop the shoulders is easier than to hold them erect. To accept the negative is easier than to assert the positive. And to force a groan is easier than to force a smile. It must be remembered that the lower animals are much quicker to respond to fear than to pleasure. The trouble seeker maintains himself in a similar unflattering attitude.

To be sure, some trouble seekers of the chronic order have educated themselves into a routine that amounts almost to genius. What do you think of a man—a vigorous, prosperous, talented, between-times happy man—who will sit and weep and commune: "Supposing I had married, and we had a son, and he grew up, and got into bad ways, and committed murder, and was convicted, and is to be hanged to-morrow! Great Scott, what am I going to do!"

I know the man. But remarkable as is his genius for making himself and others miserable by seeking trouble, of higher quality do I deem the old lady counting her eggs and chickens, in the celebrated fable.

Practically anybody can upraise the specter of trouble, and practically everybody will admit that the most of these specters prove only smoke. If trouble seekers would travel their own trail and be content to let their happier-minded



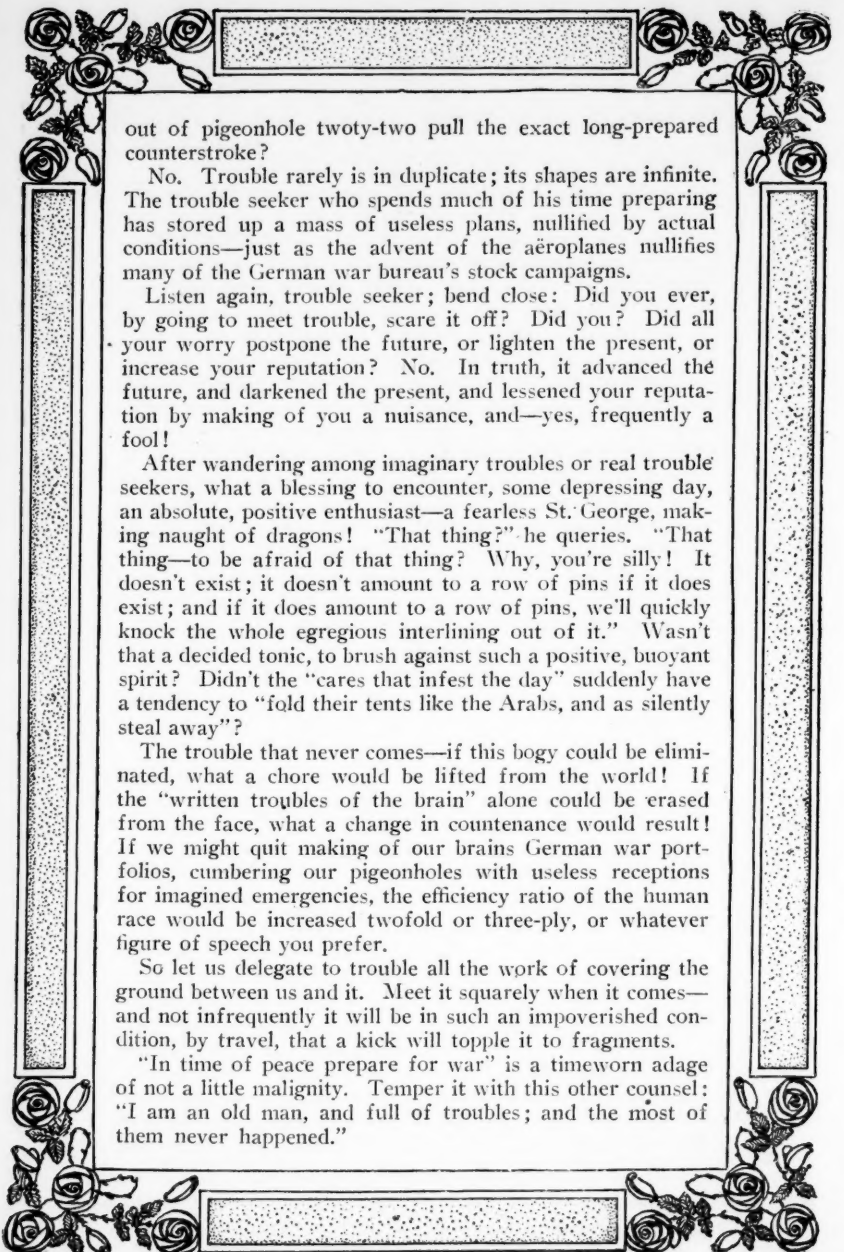
sisters and fellows also travel an own trail, slight attention need be paid to the specters. However, as misery loves company, so the trouble seeker insists upon drawing to the false scent all the travelers within reach.

That's it! *If* the trouble raiser, the worrier, for instance, would only be satisfied with doing his own or her own worrying, until quitting time, and would not determine that wife or children or sister or brother or companion or associate should worry, too, there would exist small excuse for this little essay. But the trouble seeker doesn't confine himself or herself to his or her individual pleasure. No; like the dog baying at the moon he—or she—desires that all the world shall share this delightful melancholy. Sometimes he—or she—waxes fairly furious because that new bugbear which he—or she—has discovered doesn't cloud the horizon of people right and left.

There is the "blues"—another form of trouble seeking. In many cases, the "blues" is a disease. Of course, a hint of the liver may be inferred; but, again, the "blues" is a distinct mental disease. To sundry of us, a debauch of the "blues" is the most deliciously painful state—like the passage of an overly large spoonful of ice cream. But to have the "blues" solus is to experience them in their least enjoyable measure; we may wish to mope, yet we wish to be noticed—to be sympathized with, or to be cajoled, or to be combated.

This is selfishness, pure and simple; and the trouble seeker of any variety is apt to be selfish, insisting that other persons assume his self-imposed burden. During the period of incubation—I mean, while such an unfortunate disturber is breaking out with trouble, and is contagious, he—or she, for let us not omit a wide sisterhood—should be isolated, or else should wear a monitory cow bell.

The trouble seeker's brain is constantly being stored with plans and devices and other defensive outlays, which shall be dealt out to trouble when it comes. The brain and mind together are like the portfolio of the German war bureau, where campaigns are labeled and tucked away in pigeon-holes, awaiting every emergency. Now, listen, trouble seeker: In actual experience, when trouble arrived, was it all cut and dried, and in the original package, so that all you need do was to say: "Ah! trouble of variety twenty-two," and



out of pigeonhole twenty-two pull the exact long-prepared counterstroke?

No. Trouble rarely is in duplicate; its shapes are infinite. The trouble seeker who spends much of his time preparing has stored up a mass of useless plans, nullified by actual conditions—just as the advent of the aeroplanes nullifies many of the German war bureau's stock campaigns.

Listen again, trouble seeker; bend close: Did you ever, by going to meet trouble, scare it off? Did you? Did all your worry postpone the future, or lighten the present, or increase your reputation? No. In truth, it advanced the future, and darkened the present, and lessened your reputation by making of you a nuisance, and—yes, frequently a fool!

After wandering among imaginary troubles or real trouble seekers, what a blessing to encounter, some depressing day, an absolute, positive enthusiast—a fearless St. George, making naught of dragons! "That thing?" he queries. "That thing—to be afraid of that thing? Why, you're silly! It doesn't exist; it doesn't amount to a row of pins if it does exist; and if it does amount to a row of pins, we'll quickly knock the whole egregious interlining out of it." Wasn't that a decided tonic, to brush against such a positive, buoyant spirit? Didn't the "cares that infest the day" suddenly have a tendency to "fold their tents like the Arabs, and as silently steal away"?

The trouble that never comes—if this bogey could be eliminated, what a chore would be lifted from the world! If the "written troubles of the brain" alone could be erased from the face, what a change in countenance would result! If we might quit making of our brains German war portfolios, cumbering our pigeonholes with useless receptions for imagined emergencies, the efficiency ratio of the human race would be increased twofold or threefold, or whatever figure of speech you prefer.

So let us delegate to trouble all the work of covering the ground between us and it. Meet it squarely when it comes—and not infrequently it will be in such an impoverished condition, by travel, that a kick will topple it to fragments.

"In time of peace prepare for war" is a timeworn adage of not a little malignity. Temper it with this other counsel: "I am an old man, and full of troubles; and the most of them never happened."

THE BOY SOPRANO

By MARION SHORT



Author of

"The Famous Cochran Children,"

"The Cherry Satin Gown," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY
E. C. CASWELL

IT was the night of the grand annual concert of the Harlem Chapter of the Scimitar Lodge.

Little Verdant Cochran was to play a couple of violin solos, and her name appeared in big print on the program. In company with her parents and her younger sister, Fern, she arrived early at the lodge rooms.

Just inside the entrance they found Mr. Crosby, the lyceum agent who had booked Verdant for the entertainment. As was his frequent custom, he was on hand to see that the professional part of the program was safely launched. He showed the family into the dressing room.

"Always glad to secure Miss Verdant's services," he remarked, as he snapped on the lights. "She never gets in late. She never keeps me guessing and an audience waiting. Some people do—Waldo Edwards, for instance."

"The boy soprano?" inquired Verdant, with lively interest. Already she was hanging her dainty evening cape on a hook of the dressing-room door. "Does he sing here to-night?"

Mr. Crosby nodded. "He made a hit last year, and they asked me to engage him again." The lyceum agent had a round and genial face, but just

now his bland forehead was creased with an anxious frown. "The kid's all right enough—it's his mother's fault that his tardiness is chronic. She's crazy about his voice—seems to be afraid if he shows up on time anywhere he may be shoved in ahead of the choice spot on the program. They're as likely to arrive at ten p. m. as at eight."

As he spoke, the street door behind him opened, and the pair in question appeared. Mr. Crosby started back in surprise as he saw them, and gave a comical grimace behind his hand at the Cochrans. "Early for the first time in history," he whispered. "Must be something wrong with their clock!"

The white plumes that adorned Mrs. Edwards' picture hat bobbed springily as she advanced to give the agent her hand. She was very slender and exceedingly blond, and with her pretty, painted face looked like a chorus girl prepared for the glare of the footlights. Her son was so close behind her that he stepped on her silken train as she released it, and halted her progress for a moment.

"Waldo," she exclaimed, giving him a slight, reproachful shove, "what makes you so awkward lately?"

The boy was blond-haired, like her—

self, but there the resemblance ended. He had a strong and rather serious young countenance, and his tall, broad-shouldered figure made the velvet Fauntleroy suit he was wearing look like a travesty of earlier childhood. His wide, turnover collar, of which he seemed keenly conscious, reached out almost to the edge of his shoulder blades. He moved his neck uneasily as he was being introduced to Verdant and Fern, and with an embarrassed gesture pushed back the infantile lock of blond hair that was drooping over his forehead.

"Let your hair alone, Waldo," his mother admonished him. Her utterance was high-pitched and nervous. She reached and pulled at the boy's locks until the blond curl dangled as before in front of his right eye.

Fern gave an involuntary giggle, and Waldo's face reddened as he heard it.

"Sh, Fern!" Mrs. Cochran exclaimed under her breath. "How many times must I speak to you about that gigglin' habit?"

She, like the sensible woman that she was, had taken in the situation at a glance. Mrs. Edwards was making a determined but futile attempt to retard the inevitable by forcing her son to continue in the semblance of a juvenility he had unmistakably outgrown.

Catching her look of disapproval, Mrs. Edwards rustled over to take a seat beside her, favoring her with an ingratiating smile. Mrs. Edwards was fond of the good opinion of the world, whether she deserved it or not.

"Waldo is so foolish," she murmured plaintively, "and it worries me! Just because some of the older boys tease him about his hair, he wants to have it cut short like theirs. I don't seem to be able to get the notion out of his head, no matter what I say! Why, it would simply disfigure him to lose his curls! People like to see a professional child look picturesque on the stage—don't you think so?"

"His hair is pretty," conceded Mrs. Cochran diplomatically. "But of course he can't wear it long like that always."

"Oh, no, not always—but for a couple of years yet," Mrs. Edwards insisted; "and he shouldn't mind if the boys do tease him. They're just envious of his looks, that's all. He happens to be dreadfully tall for his age, but he's a mere child, and naturally I wish him to appear like one."

Waldo sat on a low bench at the opposite side of the room, and as Mrs. Cochran saw him vainly endeavoring to pull the abbreviated knickerbockers over his protruding knees, her heart went out to him in pity.

"Of course, we like to keep our children babies as long as we can," she said gently, "but when a little chicken hops out of its shell, we can't expect it to go around wearin' part of its old coverin' still—it's done with it for good and all." She stopped, seeing that Mrs. Edwards was not listening in the least. That lady's bright, dominant eyes were fixed intently on the boy across the room.

"Stop clearing your throat, Waldo!" She stamped an impatient foot as she spoke. "Do you want to be all hoarsed up before your solo comes?"

Waldo moved uneasily and crossed and recrossed his legs.

His mother's beringed fingers glit-tered as she began to undo a fancy music roll.

"Did you ever hear my son sing, Mrs. Cochran?" she inquired.

"No," replied Mrs. Cochran, waving to her husband as he stepped out into the audience room; "but I've often wished I might, and am looking forward to it; so are the children."

"Yes, indeed we are," exclaimed Verdant, coming to the side of her mother's chair.

"We've heard he was one of the best choir boys in New York," volunteered Fern, backing up to the maternal knee to have her sash retied.

"Not only in New York," corrected Mrs. Edwards, with proud emphasis; "he's the greatest boy soprano in the world."

In awed silence the two little girls turned and stared at Waldo, and discovered a boy plainly ashamed and re-

bellious of his mother's statement. Seeing his embarrassment, the young violinist sent him a smile of such understanding sympathy that somehow he felt comforted.

It was to be Verdant's first public appearance since the valuable Cremona violin had been presented to her by a rich and admiring music lover from abroad, and never before had she tuned an instrument with such careful and loving interest. Her cheeks wore an

the few who had previously been charmed by her playing realized what was in store for them. Inspired by the golden cadences of her superb violin, she arose to a height of achievement that thrilled and astonished even those who loved and admired her most. Mrs. Cochran could hardly keep back the tears, feeling that, with the aid of such an instrument, Verdant must soon come into her own. The applause that followed the child's exit from the



"Did you ever hear my son sing, Mrs. Cochran?" she inquired.

unaccustomed flush, and her dark eyes shone with a starry radiance. Fern's homely but oddly intelligent little face expressed her complete absorption in her sister's coming performance. She was to play the accompaniment to Verdant's encore number, and could hardly wait until the first ambitious solo—with Professor Cochran at the piano—was over.

When Verdant—as appealingly pretty as a wild rose in her fluffy pink dress—came before the audience with her usual simplicity of manner, only

stage was loud to the point of storminess.

Verdant stopped in the dressing room just long enough to turn a peg and sound a string before returning to answer the insistent summons of the audience.

"Oh, mamma—isn't my violin a wonder? I just love it!"

Fern, waiting eagerly with the encore music in her hands, quickly preceded the little violinist back onto the stage. Verdant, bowing, sank into her pink skirts as a bee might sink into the



Only the few who had previously been charmed by her playing realized what was in store for them.

heart of a rose. Fern settled into place before the piano, and gracefully draped her sash over the piano stool. She was not afflicted with Verdant's natural shyness, and enjoyed basking in the public view exceedingly.

Just inside the dressing-room door, Mrs. Edwards stood at the shoulder of Mrs. Cochran, watching the young performers.

"You'd hardly know they were sisters, would you?" inquired Mrs. Cochran. "Verdant's hair is as black as ink, and Fern's is almost red. In Connelstown, Ohio, where we lived before we moved to New York—" She stopped, noticing a strange expression of chagrin upon the face of her neighbor, a look in which envy and resentment mingled. "Why, it can't be the pore thing is jealous of Verdant's makin' a hit!" she said to herself, amazed and repelled at the thought. "My land,

there's room in this big world for the best that every one has to give it!"

Waldo spoke up from his seat against the wall:

"She plays dandy—doesn't she, ma?"

"Very nicely—for such a child," Mrs. Edwards answered coldly, turning toward him and away from Mrs. Cochran.

"Will you stop clearing your throat?" she shrilled severely. "You haven't a cold, and there's no excuse for it. You don't act like yourself, anyhow. You have floundered around until your collar is all mussed."

"No wonder I've floundered," the boy retorted, with sudden feeling. "I'm scared silly when I think of trying to sing to-

night. I oughtn't to do it with my voice like it is, and you know it!"

Mrs. Edwards rapped the table with an impatient fist.

"Nonsense!" she exclaimed.

"No, it isn't nonsense. You'll be sorry if you make me sing, ma—remember what I'm telling you!"

"Waldo!" The white-plumed little woman fairly shrieked the name of her offspring. "You'll drive me frantic if you set yourself against me. I won't have you talking like that. Why should you be afraid to sing? There's nothing in the world happened to your voice! Don't you tell me again that there has! I won't stand it!"

Her lips tightened into a straight red line.

Waldo got up and began to walk the floor with a stride that was almost manly. He was half a head taller than his mother, and once more his clothing

impressed Mrs. Cochran as inappropriate to the point of ridiculousness.

A recitation by the daughter of the junior warden—a clever amateur—followed Verdant's encore selection on the program, and then Mrs. Edwards gave the reluctant Waldo a push that sent him fairly stumbling through the door that led onto the stage.

Mrs. Cochran and the two little girls clustered into an expectant group behind her. Verdant was always interested in watching the performances of other artists who happened to be on the program with her, and especially in those near her own age.

Waldo Edwards had made a very favorable impression when singing for the Scimitar Lodge at their last yearly concert, and the rustling of programs and murmur of voices as he came forward told how pleasantly he was remembered.

The accompanist played a preliminary passage in florid style, and then the boy's bell-like tones sounded out—as vibrant and sweet as the notes of a distant chime.

Verdant was enraptured. "Oh, isn't he just fine?" she whispered, and for the first time Mrs. Edwards turned and looked at her with kindly eyes. Waldo's voice faltered slightly, and her attention was instantly recalled.

"Why, how nervous he acts!" she exclaimed agitatedly. "I never saw him clutch at his clothes like that—not even the first time he ever sang in public!"

As she ceased speaking, the boy missed a note, and, shortly after, another one was dropped out as completely as when a dead key is struck on the piano. He sent his mother a side-long glance, half scared and wholly reproachful. She shook a threatening finger at him, and he faced the audience again, still clutching in a sort of panic at the sides of his velvet knickerbockers. For a moment his voice seemed to recover itself, but as he approached the higher reaches of the song it began to tremble noticeably. Mrs. Edwards convulsively grasped Mrs. Cochran by the arm.

"If he dares!" she breathed between

set teeth. "If he dares!" Her opulent white plumes fairly shivered.

Mrs. Cochran moved back to free herself from the grip of those tense fingers. For the first time she realized just why Waldo had been so reluctant to face the audience, and it repelled her to perceive that the mother vanity of Mrs. Edwards was infinitely greater than her mother love. Waldo was in a transition stage of existence, and his voice was changing from childish treble into the manly quality henceforth to be his unspectacular heritage through life. Suddenly there happened the very thing that he had been dreading most. In the midst of the high, clear phrase he was singing, there sounded a strange, deep note as curiously unmusical as the quack of a gosling. It was the grotesque death knell to his career as a famous boy soprano. His mother had flung herself against an invincible law of nature in vain!

Though Waldo's concluding tones were as clear and beautiful as those with which he had begun his song, his efforts had been too plainly laborious to win him a recall.

He mopped a perspiring forehead with a small silken handkerchief as he returned to the dressing room.

Mrs. Edwards, her face pale and stricken, stood rigidly awaiting him.

"I told you I oughtn't to try it," he began, but she motioned him to silence.

"That's just what was the matter," she exclaimed chokingly, trembling from head to foot. "You didn't try—you wouldn't try—not if it broke my heart! You gave way to a silly notion that made a coward of you, and disgraced me—you cruel, ungrateful boy!"

Waldo's look was sorrowful, but unrepentant. He shrugged his shoulders, and slouched over to the farther corner of the room, where he sat down, shoving back his crinkly blond locks as he did so.

His mother sprang toward him, glad of an excuse to express further her unreasonable rage.

"Let your hair alone!" she cried hysterically. "Do you want to drive me wild?"

From the audience there swept the sound of profuse handclapping. The orator of the evening had just been introduced.

Presently, while the speech was in progress, Mr. Crosby slipped into the dressing room, accompanied by Mr. Ford, who was a lodge member and the chairman of the entertainment committee. Mr. Crosby's expression was anything but amiable, and Mrs. Edwards quailed a bit as she met his eyes. The politeness of his manner did not hide the fact that he was plainly disconcerted and indignant.

"Why didn't you inform me beforehand, Mrs. Edwards, that the voice was not to be depended on?" he inquired, with glacial smoothness. "I could easily have secured that new boy soprano from California in Waldo's place. I had no wish to work a hardship on your son, and certainly none to disappoint the audience out there."

Having been an actress in her earlier youth, some of the tricks of the trade still remained with her, and Mrs. Edwards smiled up into the faces of the two men with a most deceptive appearance of candor. She was not yet willing to acknowledge herself beaten.

"Of course, I'm sorry it happened the way it did," she said sweetly. "But it was just a little slip on Waldo's part—that's all. He rasped his throat playing baseball this afternoon. You were playing baseball, weren't you, Waldo?"

Waldo acknowledged the truth of her statement, but there was reserve in the manner of his nod. He had indeed been playing baseball, but knew that he had done nothing to irritate his throat.

"His voice is exactly the same as it always was," continued the little woman, with pleasant positiveness.

"Hardly, Mrs. Edwards," Crosby objected. "The truth is, one can't expect him—"

But Mrs. Edwards hastily interrupted him.

"Oh, but his voice is exactly the same as ever, and better—I insist upon it! I am his mother, and I ought to know what I am talking about. He was nervous, I admit, but he'll be all right in

his next solo. It was just an accident. Why, Waldo would never forgive himself if he didn't shine at his best before the evening is over." She tapped Mr. Ford's arm with her fan. "You Scimitar Lodge people were so lovely to him last year. We've never forgotten it."

There was mingled doubt and relief in the chairman's face.

"You think it advisable, then, to have him sing again?"

"Why, of course I do, and I know you'll not be disappointed next time."

Her eyes traveled past the men, and met the protesting blue orbs of her son, but she smiled on, unabashed.

"Well," said the chairman, "of course you should be the most competent judge in a matter like this, but, as I informed Mr. Crosby, we stand ready to excuse him from a second appearance if you have the least doubt—"

"Oh," she laughed, "but I haven't!"

Mrs. Cochran, Verdant, and Fern had taken seats in the front row outside, at the professor's request, in compliment to the visiting orator, who happened to hail from a kindred lodge in the professor's old home town, and when Mrs. Crosby and the chairman left the room, Waldo and his mother found themselves quite alone.

"Why did you tell them I would sing again?" The boy's voice wavered unsteadily as he put the question, and Mrs. Edwards scowled as she heard it. She was one of those blindly foolish mothers of prodigies with whom it is useless to reason. To relinquish in a second, as forever lost, the thing on which her insatiable vanity had fed for years was to her like being asked to let go of a life raft in the midst of troublous waters. "You don't know how it feels," poor Waldo continued, "to stand up before all those people and know you're liable to squawk any minute instead of sing."

Mrs. Edwards, standing before the mirror of the little dressing table, applied a powder puff to her nose.

"You'll be all right next time—you've got to be," she stated stubbornly.

"I'll never be all right again—and you know it, ma!"

"Do you think I'm going to be beaten like this—just when your voice is attracting more attention than it ever did?" Nervously she tore loose the swansdown of the powder puff, and the dismembered fluffiness protruded from between her clenched fingers. "Do you think I'm going to let the audience set that Cochran young one above you?"

She crossed to the table, and, taking up the bow of Verdant's violin, brought it down slantwise like a whip.

"She got an encore and you didn't," she went on resentfully. "You've always been the star before, no matter who else was on the program with you. Next time you step onto that stage you've got to put her in the background where she belongs."

"You won't force me to sing—when you know how I feel about it?" He laid an appealing arm about her neck. "I went on before just to please you—when I knew what would happen if I did. It's no use doing the same thing over again." He recalled that awful moment when his voice had become unmanageable, and the ripple of spontaneous, if quickly quelled, light laughter that had followed his production of the unmusical note. "Let me off, won't you, ma?" he continued.

She pushed him from her, and they stood staring at each other, their two strong wills locking invisible horns.

"If you oppose me any more, Waldo Edwards," she said at last, in a voice almost inaudible from rage, "I think I shall hate you!"

She turned her back on him, and rushed over to the dressing-room door, staring at the perspiring orator.

Frantically Waldo clutched at his blond forelock, striving to think of some means of escape from the dreaded ordeal ahead of him.

His mother seemed to be aware of his movements without looking at the boy. "Let your hair alone!" she commanded. "How many times must I tell you to let your hair alone?"

Waldo thrust his hands into his pockets, and, sighing, gazed at the ceiling.

"I wish I could get hold of Mrs. Cochran for a moment," said Mrs. Edwards, beginning to pace the floor. "Your next number comes

so late in the evening I'm afraid everybody will be tired out. Maybe—if I put it just right—she'll agree to let you take her daughter's place on the program and have the violin come last." She sat down for a few impatient moments, then sprang up again. "I'm going out on the steps for a breath of fresh air. It seems as if that man intended to talk all night—but if you see a sign of his getting to the end—call me in."

She opened the street door, and stepped out into the moonlight.



With a quick snip of the scissors, he severed it at his forehead's edge.

Waldo's face cleared a little. He could think better with his mother out of the room. The vague idea that had floated into his head a moment before began to take definite shape. He pulled harder than ever at the babyish lock crossing the vision of his eye. It was a desperate move he was contemplating, but it seemed to him that it required just that to extricate him from a desperate situation.

Mrs. Cochran, with true motherly foresight, invariably brought with her to entertainments a small case containing needles, thread, thimbles, and scissors to be ready for emergencies of ripped flounces or loosened ribbons on the children's concert gowns. The case lay open on the table now. Waldo's eyes saw but one object—a pair of glittering steel scissors. Cautiously he left his seat against the wall. A backward glance assured him that his mother was not within range of vision. In another moment he had slipped the scissors from the leather loop that held them in place. He shook his head slightly, and watched the swaying of the dangling lock that had for so long been his affliction and his mother's pride. Suddenly he pulled it straight down in front of his nose, regarding it with cross-eyed fixedness, and, with a quick snip of the scissors, severed it at his forehead's edge. It dropped inside Verdant's violin case like a thick skein of golden silk. While his courage was at its height, he hacked at the ornamental curls that clustered about each ear, and so made his work of havoc complete. Then, carefully replacing the scissors, he walked over to the mirror. After one fiercely satisfied glance at himself, he pulled his cap well down over his shorn forehead, and marched over to the door at the other side of which waited his mother.

"I think the man is about through his speech," he announced; "it sounds that way."

Mrs. Edwards was standing on a lower step fanning herself. It was in the late fall, but the weather was unseasonably warm.

"I know now just how I'm going to

frame that request to Mrs. Cochran," she said, reëntering. "I'll put it on the grounds of your nervousness—that the longer you wait the worse you get. You've got to have your chance before that child plays again and takes all the enthusiasm out of the audience that should go to you. It's only fair—seeing that she has made one hit already and you haven't."

They stood facing each other—the table between them.

Without a word of warning Waldo pulled the cap from his head, and stood revealed in all his new-found ugliness. Fortunately, just at that moment the orator made a telling point, and Mrs. Edwards' shriek was lost in the applause that surged up from his listeners.

"Waldo—what—has—happened?"

Her face paled, and she clutched at the edge of the table for support. As she did so, her eyes fell on the telltale strand of hair in the violin case and other stray bits of shorn glory that were scattered over the green felt table spread.

"I had to do it, ma," Waldo said quietly. "I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I'm not a kid any more, and my kid voice and looks are gone for good. I had to prove it to you somehow——"

"But you can't be seen by any one looking like that!" gasped Mrs. Edwards, conscious at first of nothing but the appalling dilemma of the moment.

"I know I can't," assented Waldo. "That's why I did it—so you wouldn't want me to go out there before that crowd again any more than I want to go myself, nor any other crowd, either!"

The full significance of what he had done swept over her, and she collapsed helplessly into a chair, covering her face with her hands.

Mrs. Cochran tiptoed in from the audience room.

"That's a fine speech he's makin'," she said softly, "but I got to worryin' for fear I'd forgot to put in Verdant's extry encore——" She stopped in astonishment as she caught sight of Waldo's forehead, with its pale, upstanding stubble where the troublesome

forelock had been. As mutely eloquent of the scene that had just transpired was the drooping figure of the crushed Mrs. Edwards. Embarrassed, Mrs. Cochran took up a stack of Verdant's music, and began turning the leaves.

In a moment Waldo's mother raised her head and extended dramatic hands toward Mrs. Cochran.

"Do you see what he has done?" she wailed. "The unnatural child! See how he has turned on me—look at his hair! He's made a fright of himself—he can never appear in public again! Oh, if you only knew what this means to me, Mrs. Cochran—it's as if he had died!" Her body shook with sobs.

"Come, now, you mustn't give way like that," said Mrs. Cochran.

"It's as if he had died!" repeated Mrs. Edwards, from the depths of a smothering handkerchief.

"No, it ain't as if he had died," Mrs. Cochran drew her chair up close, and her voice reached Mrs. Edwards' ear in a gentle murmur. "Put away your memories of his baby curls, and his baby voice, along with his baby clothes, as somethin' that was once very dear, and that you'll always remember, but that belongs in the past forever, and you wouldn't have in place of the boy that's now if you could."

"It's as if he had died!" Mrs. Edwards repeated, with chanting stubbornness.

"No, it ain't," reiterated Mrs. Cochran in reply; "it's a long ways from it, and you ought to thank the Lord that it is. There ain't any grief like the loneliness that losin' 'em brings. I know. My boy died when he was a baby." Her voice trailed off tremulously, and for a moment there was silence. "I reckon if he had lived to be big like Waldo," she went on presently, "he might have given my feelin's an awful jolt sometimes, but don't you suppose I'd be glad and thankful to have him now with all his faults? Why, I'd put my arms around him, and forgive him, and love him, and be proud of him, voice or no voice, curls or no curls, and no matter what boyish tantrum he'd be'n guilty of!"

5

"But I've been so good to Waldo," moaned Mrs. Edwards, "and he disobeyed me, defied me——"

"Mebbe he shouldn't have done *just* what he did," owned Mrs. Cochran soothingly; "but don't you think your tryin' to keep him a baby was sort of flyin' in the face of Providence? It's the Lord's law that when a bud wants to burst into a bloomin' flower, it's a sin and shame not to let it. Otherwise you're apt to blight the bud so much that it can't never blossom out just the way it was intended to."

"Maybe I haven't—looked at it just right," owned Mrs. Edwards, with difficulty; "but oh, to have nothing now to put him ahead of other children—nothing to be proud of——"

Loud handclapping marked the long-deferred close of the oration, and Mrs. Edwards sprang up.

"I don't want to have Mr. Crosby and that other man to reckon with," she exclaimed, "and will you please just tell them that—that Waldo and I have gone home—and—nothing more?"

"That's all they need to know," said Mrs. Cochran practically.

"Please say, though," begged Waldo anxiously, "that it's my fault, and not mother's, that I dodged my second solo. I don't want them blaming mother."

As Mrs. Cochran nodded an assent, Waldo put on his cap, and stepped out into the street.

"He don't want his mother blamed—and you say you have nothin' to be proud of!" Mrs. Cochran's eyes moistened, and, seeing that her son was still admired, though in a different way, Mrs. Edwards' drooping spirits began to revive. She was not a great-souled woman, but she rose to the best that was in her.

"Of course, I know he's a fine, manly boy," she said. "All his life he never opposed me as he did to-night. His father has been crazy to have him stop singing in public and go to military school—but I wouldn't give in." She smiled with a touch of her former vanity as she turned at the door, though her lip still quivered. Said she: "He *will* look well in uniform, won't he?"



On the Vanishing Art of Hospitality

By Anne O'Hagan

Author of "Father at All Angels," "Miss Franklin Reënters Society," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY HARRIET ADAIR NEWCOMB

THERE is one cause," said the paterfamilias, capping his fountain pen and closing his check book, "to which I should more gladly contribute than to this worthy one which has just mulcted me of ten dollars." He looked over his glasses at his household audience of one, and played with the pamphlets which had been part of the means of the mulcting to which he referred.

"Of course, I suppose it is worth while that there should be organizations for Keeping Alive the Native Hand Industries of the Southern Mountains. I dare say that it is a good thing that societies of earnest ladies should exist like those that succeeded in obtaining ten and fifteen dollars respectively from me last winter for the Preservation of Lace-making Skill Among the Women of the Italian Tenements, and for the Maintenance of National Sports and Customs Among the South European Immigrants. I was never quite sure," he pursued meditatively, "whether I

was subscribing to a fund for the purchase of stilettos or not, or whether I might not be in some way aiding the Mafia; but the pleasant young lady from the Italian branch of the Do Unto Others Settlement assured me that my ten—or was it my fifteen?—should not conduce to lawlessness. And I dare say it's all very well, and even necessary, that good customs of a community or a race should not be allowed to die merely because the race changes its habitat or the community pulls up stakes. Only I should like to see the movement for the Preservation of This and That extended to include a movement for the Preservation of the Spirit of Hospitality. That used to be an excellent American institution, and I believe it is in as much need of help as the Blue Hand-woven Spread industry or the Indian Water Jug business."

Materfamilias looked up from the bread-and-butter letter she was writing to her new daughter-in-law's second cousin, who had kindly put her up in

Sandusky, Ohio, for the wedding of said new daughter-in-law, and said, with some asperity, that she was sick of hospitality, and that the society to which she would like to contribute her mite would be a Society for Letting People Entertain Themselves. And then she returned to her letter, and finished a sentence about "your delightful, whole-souled hospitality, which I shall hope to have the opportunity of repaying some day."

"You have hit on the crux of the whole question," Paterfamilias pounced upon her remark with the argumentative fervor which has helped to keep the art of conversation alive in their household after thirty years of married talk. "Entertainment, in the sense in which you use the word, is not hospitality; it isn't even a second cousin to hospitality. Indeed, as you suggest, it may be the deadliest foe of hospitality."

Paterfamilias then proceeded to give a brief outline of the important differences between hospitality and entertaining. He referred to his consort's two "at homes" of the winter. "Did you call those hospitality?" he demanded.

"No," replied the lady tersely, as she pounded a badly gummed envelope with her fist, "I called them getting even."

"There you are!" he cried, in humorous despair. "That is a brutally, cynically frank expression of the whole thing. Hospitality is dead, or is dying; 'getting even' is what has taken its place. Now, my mother never gave an 'at home' in her life. She never gave a tea. But she practiced hospitality."

"Heaven help her!" murmured materfamilias, taking fresh sheets of paper from a pigeonhole to invite six people to dinner two weeks hence. But her husband paid no heed to her interruption.

"I think I may say," he pursued, with evident pride in the recollection, "that we never knew how many would sit down to table with us, except perhaps at breakfast. Of course, the fact that my father was a suburban clergyman made it more necessary for her than for most women to be prepared to keep an open house; but it was not only the

exigencies of his profession, it was the spirit of the time, that made for a free and generous hospitality. The governor was likely to bring one of his assistants home to dinner, or to keep the person who had been consulting him in his study to supper. We were a large family of children, as you know—"

"Heaven help her!" again murmured materfamilias, rather flippantly.

"And we were all encouraged to bring our friends home with us," continued her husband, regardless of interruption. "Sometimes there would be five or six strange children at a meal. We did not"—he eyed his wife accusingly—"have pink-shaded candles on the table, and I don't recall finger bowls. But there was plenty of good, wholesome food, and there was an intimate, friendly life. And there was a great deal of real hospitality—the sort that is dying out in the land!"

"Well, it was a question between its dying out and the good hostess' dying out," his wife assured him briefly, her mind on other things. "Now, don't forget we're asking the Dwights, the Newcombs, and the Jimmy Greens for two weeks from to-morrow—"

"Good Lord, Mary!" ejaculated her spouse. "Do we have to have that Newcomb woman again this winter?"

"We haven't had her once yet; you're thinking of last winter! Wouldn't it be charming, dear, if the good, old spirit of hospitality were alive, and she could run in with her knitting to spend the day with me, and to be here to greet you on your return from the office, say, six or seven times a month?"

"If we knew her in a less, artificial way," said he, standing gallantly by his guns, "doubtless we should find in her a great deal to admire and to like. We should probably learn to enjoy her. And even if we didn't, the thing would be well worth doing despite a few petty annoyances. We talk a great deal," he pursued, "about the beauty of family life, about the family as the foundation, the corner stone, of our society. Now, what does that mean if it does not mean carrying the ideals of family life, the helpfulness of family life, the intimacy

of family life, over into the social life? And how is that to be done except by the resuscitation of the vanishing virtue of hospitality? Old-fashioned hospitality, come-and-spend-the-day hospitality, visit-us-for-as-long-as-you-can hospitality, drop-in-any-time-and-take-potluck-with-us hospitality? You organize a society for that, my dear, and I'll contribute to it more generously than even to your suffrage cause."

"There is nobody in the world," Mary informed him solemnly, "except a few old fogies intoxicated with the sound of ancient phrases, who wants that sort of hospitality kept alive, or resuscitated, or whatever you choose to call it. I myself am a friendly soul, as you will bear witness, but I vow to you that, after fifty-four years of living and adding to my list of acquaintances and friends, there are but three houses where I enjoy making one of those old-fashioned visits of which you talk so fondly. Only three! There are probably three hundred—or at any rate thirty—where I would just as lief as not spend a week-end. There are three thousand where I could spend the evening gladly. But a week-end is no more your old-fashioned hospitality than is my dinner two weeks from to-morrow like your mother's elastic supper table. A week-end is no more intimate than one wishes to make it. That's where it is superior to the old-fashioned visits."

"I remember," interrupted her husband dreamily, "my Aunt Sallie Rogers. She was mother's sister, you know, and she married a Southerner—

one of the real Southerners, open-hearted, open-handed, improvident. I used to pay them extended visits in vacation time. Their house was a long wooden one, with double verandas all around it—a great, roomy, Southern mansion of a place. And my recollection of that big house is that it was always crowded; the girls were always doubling up because Cousin Fanny and her daughters had come to stay a month, or because Aunt Tilly had arrived from California, and wasn't going back until next September—it being

now April; or because the Henley girls from the city had

come out to stay a fortnight, and to go to the barbecue at the courthouse,

and the dance at Fairfax,

and Leah Sewall's wedding,

and the lawn party at Robinson's.

And the girls—I mean Aunt

Sallie's daughters and their

cousins and their

more or less permanent guests—

liked the crowding and the doubling up. As for

us boys, we were never so happy as when some

of us had to sleep on a shakedown on the floor

because all the beds had been commandeered for an unexpected accession of grown-ups. Those verandas live in my memory as always peopled with bright, charming figures. There were always ladies doing needlework out under the trees, and girls playing croquet, and ramshackle carryalls heaving into sight with a burden of friends who 'just made up their minds that mornin' at breakfast that they wanted to see Sallie Rogers that day! And there were always the smartly varnished buggies of the youth of the countryside drawn up under



"Those verandas live in my memory as always peopled with bright, charming figures."



"Your blessed hospitality never flourished much anywhere in this country except in the South, where it was nourished by slavery."

Aunt Sallie Rogers' sheds, and good-looking horses hitched to the hitching posts. Aunt Sallie's girls and their friends were belles, I can tell you!"

"Who," inquired Mary thoughtfully, "cooked for the bright groups of young ladies and old ones, who played croquet and did needlework so picturesquely?"

"Oh, the darkies," replied the unsuspicious paterfamilias. "It was not so long after the war that the old ties had been entirely sundered. I think that Aunt Sallie had about as many hangers-on in the kitchen and in the field as she had once had slaves. They 'just naturally' settled down on the Rogerses when they were freed. What else could they do, poor things?"

"It helped some with the cooking. And the bed making," observed Mary thoughtfully. "Don't you see, Philip, that the decline of the ancient art of hospitality is, like the decline of handwoven bedspreads and of handmade laces and hand-molded water jugs, an economic question? First, along come

your great, modern inventions, your spinning jennies and chemical dyes and so on—I'm not strong on inventions," she admitted handsomely, "and then, of course, people lose their ability to make the old things, to dye in the old-fashioned way. The cheap processes prevail, crowd the laborious, artistic processes to the wall. And they do more than that. The women, to a great extent, have followed their work from the home to the factory until you have a race of factory girls who hate the thought of domestic service, who corrupt—or shall we merely say convert?—the girls who might be content with domestic service. And we women have no servants, no slaves. The age of slavery is happily past—I say 'happily' out of a timid regard for prevailing opinion; in my heart I could wish it here again—I do really wish it here every time I go to an intelligence office. Well, you are glad that slavery is past, aren't you?"

Paterfamilias hastily and somewhat hotly declared that he was.

"And I am glad that women have the opportunities of modern industry, so I say. All right, then. But let us not then wail over the departure of the picturesque adjuncts of slavery and of restricted fields for women's work! It's like wailing over the loss of lovely mossy roofs and toppling gray fences and tumble-down effectiveness in general when the country landlord repairs the farmhouse. Your blessed hospitality never flourished much anywhere in this country except in the South, where it was nourished by slavery."

"There may be a little truth in what you say," acknowledged Philip, with the firm air of a man who means to acknowledge nothing further. "Hospitality may have flourished most in the South, where there were plenty of slaves, and later plenty of hangers-on to make it moderately easy for the Southern hostesses to practice it. But it flourished everywhere—and it is not dying out most rapidly among those upon whom it bears the hardest. There is more visiting among the poor than among the rich. Your income, my dear, is not an imposing one, I grant you that, with proper compunctions and regrets. Still, you manage to keep two maids, and to hire a lot of things done in the house that our mothers didn't hire done. You don't have to make the beds when you have overnight guests; you don't have to cook the meat when I bring some one home to dinner——"

"No," said Mary grimly. "I merely have to hunt the new cook and the new chambermaid."

"It isn't circumstances alone, it's the spirit that has changed. Admit it! Admit it! Admit that your mother and mine knew their friends more intimately than you do, enjoyed them more, got more warm, close intercourse out of them. And admit that it wasn't merely the extension of the slave-owning ideals of hospitality over into the nonslave States that made it possible. Didn't you love company when you were a kid?"

Mary nodded her neatly coiffed gray head. The grim line of denial faded from her lips. She smiled.

"I adored it! If company came, I was in a fever of delight, even if it was not 'my' company. The day that it came was red-lettered, the day that it departed was gray. Of course, when it was my own, the joy was keener, the gloom correspondingly more intense. My idea of bliss was to have my Cousin Nettie come to spend the day."

"I didn't know that you cared so much for your Cousin Nettie?" Paterfamilias seemed puzzled.

"I didn't," promptly confessed materfamilias. "I loved company, that was all, and Nettie was the only one of my cousins who lived within a spend-the-day radius. That is one of the features of your dear, old-time hospitality which you mustn't forget, Philip! It wasn't the person who was coming; it was the excitement of 'company' that made the charm. So, although I didn't particularly care for Nettie—not half as much as for Rose, next door, whom I saw daily—I was full of bliss when it was announced that she was coming to spend the day."

"The unspoiled heart of a child," declared Philip, "is truer in its instincts than the wisdom of the mature. It was a right instinct that made you welcome Nettie's coming, the instinct of hospitality!"

"Fiddle!" retorted materfamilias, with the vigor of expression she had acquired from her sons. "It was a selfish little pig's desire for change and for excitement. I admit that 'company' from a child's point of view is a less wearing thing than 'company' from a woman's. A child may dispense with circumlocutions, may express herself with perfect frankness. When I told Nettie, as I generally did, that she was a cheat and a 'story' in our games, I freed my young spirit of a great deal of bitterness which in later life I am obliged to bear in a rankling, festering silence. When I was ten I could snatch Nettie's doll from her if I happened to like it better than my own—that is, I could unless she, by superior strength or strategy, prevented me. But at twenty could I snatch Nettie's beads from her? Not at all. *Noblesse oblige*

—I couldn't, it wasn't done. So no matter how much better I liked them than my own, it was 'hands off!'

"At forty could I tell her my frank opinion of the way in which she was bringing up her children? Not unless I was anxious to involve the entire family connection in internecine strife! You see, when we were small, I could grab the toy china tea set, and could say: 'You don't know how to set a table, Nettie Blaine! Come on, Rose, let us set the table!' But at forty I had to use a wearisome circumlocution of speech to convey the idea that I

"Why, Mary!" protested paterfamilias, rather amazed at the eloquent outburst he had provoked. "I never knew that you felt so—so rancorously toward your friends."

"I don't. Only toward my guests or my hosts for a 'real, good, old-fashioned visit.' Always excepting," she added hastily, "the three people whom I have already mentioned, whom I love to have here, whom I miss when they go, whom I love to visit, and whom I hate to leave. After all, Philip, hospitality as you define it is the admission into family life, with all its intimacies, all



"My idea of bliss was to have my cousin Nettie come to spend the day."

didn't altogether approve of any of Nettie's ways. I had to be ready to 'hedge' at a second's notice, to declare that she had misinterpreted, that I hadn't meant to say that her son Dick was drinking more than was good for him, but only that boys would be boys, and that the liveliest in youth made the most responsible in age! I think I might recover the 'child's unspoiled instinct for hospitality,' or whatever you called it, if I could be permitted to use the child's untamed frankness of speech with my guests! But no—the laws of your precious hospitality forbid one to insult any one beneath one's roof—and to speak the truth is so frequently an insult."

its poverties and richnesses, of outsiders, of people who can't understand, who have no right to know! Our daughter Florence, for example, is a little irritable at breakfast——"

"Florence has improved very much since she began taking the Emmanuel treatment," interrupted the head of the house, with decision.

"She has indeed; thereby proving to us that it was bad nerves and not a bad heart which was the matter with her. But her prebreakfast manner still leaves a little something to be desired. Shall we take Cousin Nettie and Aunt Sallie and the Henley girls and the rest into our confidence, and ask them to overlook Florence's matutinal curtness

because it is not due to an evil disposition, but to slightly jangled nerves? If we do we'll be met in a fortnight with the report that Florence is a candidate for a sanitarium, or else that she is an unmannerly creature who imposes on our blind, parental love with selfish tantrums! Not that Cousin Nettie and the rest will intend to prevaricate; they will only see things differently from the way in which we see them—from the way in which things really are. Why, even you, my dear Philip, have probably been more slandered because of your persistent indulgence in the old-fashioned habit of hospitality than for any of your real faults—if you have any," she added, with hasty tact, as she caught the warning expression on *paterfamilias'* face.

"People who know you very well know that you are really a fairly tidy person; people who know you only at dinners and pleasant little entertainments think you the glass of fashion, I dare say. But the dear guest of the house for a week or a month—what does she see? She sees that you have the habit of appearing at the luncheon table, when we are in the country, direct from the field, and she says in her heart that you are a disgustingly untidy person, and that she cannot fathom it how a fastidious woman like me has endured you for thirty years. And she probably adds that I cannot have been a very powerful influence in your life, or I should have changed all that. As for your family, it realizes that there is a good deal to be said for the rough-booted, low-collared effect presented by a man who is actively engaged in draining a swampy field, and who is going straight back to his work when he is through luncheon. Your nightly glass of claret has probably been magnified into a drunkard's appetite for rum—an 'habitual' drunkard's. They wonder how much you would drink if they weren't here to restrain you. No, no, no! The only people who should ever be allowed to see a family in the unavoidable negligence of everyday life are those whose love makes them see truly past the negligence! The only persons

who should ever be invited on a 'good, old-fashioned, informal visit' are one's truly dear friends."

"And how," inquired Philip, in the voice of one who drives home a telling argument, "in your new scheme of formal, unfriendly, unintimate entertainment, do you propose to make friends? One is born to a few, thank Heaven! One acquires a few in the period to which you allow the possibility of the delights of hospitality—childhood. But are we to have no friends except those who dandled us on their knees, and who care for us for old sake's sake, and the children with whom we went to school? A rather limited list, my dear!"

"One makes more enemies than friends by the practice of an unbridled hospitality," persisted his wife. "I shall never again feel toward Lorna as I once felt, before she made me a visit. I used to consider her a pleasant, lively, helpful woman—that was when I saw her about once in three months, and we used up all the impressions we had acquired in the intervening period in our conversation. We both shone. I am sure she did, and I think I did. I had that pleasant consciousness. The books we had read, the plays we had seen, the operas we had heard, the entertaining gossip we had acquired. Oh, we had plenty to talk about for two hours. And so we parted, mutually admiring, declaring each other mutually stimulating.

"Then she came to pay us a good, long visit—it was my own idea, it wasn't yours! It was when you were West that time last year. Now Lorna had never seen my drawing-room when it was not all that a drawing-room should be—in inviting order, with well-dusted books on the table and fresh flowers in the vases and new candles in the candlesticks. She had never seen my dining room except when it was a glittering, polished, shining beauty of a dining room. She had never made acquaintance with any but my company damask, which is not the same as my daily damask. She had known only my company menus, which are not quite

the same as my daily menus. Well, she came—it was up the country, you remember?"

Paterfamilias remembered, and materfamilias proceeded with her recital of woe:

"Of course, she saw the living room in its morning disorder, in its dishabille, before Bridget had gotten in to dust it, before I had changed the flowers. I somehow resented that. When one is very fond of one's home, as I am, one wants it always to present its very best face to alien eyes. I used to be so annoyed when I came down and found her seated in that living room, with last night's papers, maybe, on the floor, and last night's card table possibly still blocking the stairway, and last night's candles and last night's flowers all gone simultaneously to pieces. It irritated me to see her sitting with her book or her writing, and seeming quite oblivious of the fact that the room wasn't in order for sitting down in. It wasn't because I wanted her to clear it up, you understand—I should have resented that more intensely, I suppose; but I just didn't want her there at the disorderly hour of the day.

"And how I grew bored with her conversation—as doubtless she with mine—after the first day. I had been wont to think her spicy and stimulating, and so she was, and so she is—for two hours. But the spiciness seemed carping criticism when it went on for two days. Her piquant philosophy didn't stand the wear and tear of intimate, inside-the-house living; it began to sound sophomoric, smarty—show off. And I think she discovered that the restful quality of my personality, which she had been accustomed to compliment, was mere dullness, and that the good judgment, which she also professed to find in me, was a hidebound conventionalism. I know that she didn't come near me in town for six months after that visit. We got too much of each other, and that is what the dear, old-fashioned, open-house, Southern hospitality does for friendship."

"You choose a particularly disagree-

able woman, and try to prove a universal from her as a specific," argued her husband. "It's tricky—it's illogical, of course, and it's even worse. I could have told you that your friend, Lorna, was a shallow-pated egotist without exposing you to the month's visit," he said. "Why don't you choose a possible person for your example?"

"There are so few possible persons once they are subjected to the merciless microscopic examination of a hostess. The helpful way in which your niece, Laura, for example, jumps up when I drop my ball of wool enrages me after it has dropped fifty times, and she has jumped fifty times. I'm not decrepit. And her kindly volunteering to pour the after-dinner coffee when it comes into the living room only seems meddlesome. So does her swift and helpful swoop toward the telephone when the bell rings. And yet she's a good girl, and I am fond of her when she only comes in to see us for an hour or two in town. The irrepressible spirits of Dick's friend, Frank, are delightful—amusing, invigorating, rejuvenating when you have them with you for only a little time. But when his heavy hand is on the piano in college glees once every six hours of every day for fourteen; when his melodious but hearty voice accompanies his playing the same number of times; when his practical jokes have been played daily and especially nightly; when his familiarity and his bravado have all been seen one hundred times or so, oh, how he makes one long for a lodge in some vast wilderness, some boundless contiguity of space, or whatever the old place is where one may be comparatively alone!"

"It's the cold-heartedness of extreme age creeping steadily upon you!" paterfamilias taunted her, and again she responded with an undignified quotation from her sons:

"Age nothing! I am a great deal warmer-hearted than when my Cousin Nettie's coming used to seem the most desirable happening in the world. In those days the only matters that stirred my tears were bumps on my own fore-

head and scratches on my own knees. Now I am ready to weep over the woes of all the world. Then I was unwilling that any one should possess anything that I chanced to want; now I am able to take an altruistic pleasure in the belongings of others. Never talk to me about the warm heart of childhood—that's another traditional humbug that I shall be pleased to expose when I've completely exposed the hospitality myth. Never talk to me about the imagination of childhood—childhood never sees what isn't before its eyes, can't construct the terrifying possible, can't make personal and individual all the trouble of all the world. That is why it is so cold-hearted, so pitiless. But meantime—"

"About the vanishing virtue of hospitality?" suggested her husband.

"It was a virtue, that is true," admitted his wife. "So was knight-errantry full of charming practices which are now happily outgrown. There was a lot of beautiful workmanship in chain armor, I suppose, and it developed a strong race of men to carry it around. It also made for courage. But golf develops a strong race of men, too, and cowardice hasn't been a concomitant of tweeds and cheviots. Hospitality was a laborious and trying way of promoting certain valuable things—friendliness, knowledge of the world and of the people therein, of broadening interests, of burnishing rustic wits and rubbing up rustic manners. When it took two weeks to come from Philadelphia to New York, there was a perfectly good and legitimate reason why Cousin Hannah should stay for a month with Cousin Bethiah. Cousin Hannah couldn't afford a journey like that for two days. When there was no telephonic means of communication among families, Brother John's household was to be forgiven for heaving in sight across the ridge in a crowded carryall without warning to Brother James'. When the post was an uncertain thing and an expensive thing, there were reasons why the unheralded guest was not firmly shown the door, and told that the house was full, or the family just

about to go out to spend the evening. When taverns were few and far between, every house had to be prepared to be a tavern of sorts at any time. Hospitality, my dear Philip, was a primitive necessity, and it is idle to try to make it over into a modern virtue. It is no more virtuous to be hospitable, in your sense, now—when the mail service is on the whole excellent, the telegraphic service not ruinously dear, and the telephone buzzing cheerfully in every house in every hamlet—than it is virtuous to take a weekly bath in a laundry tub beside the kitchen stove, with water laboriously hauled from the cistern, when there is a porcelain bath with hot and cold water upstairs. Nowadays, we all live next door to one another; we may know and care for and sympathize with one another without stirring out of our armchairs. Shall I waste my time and try your patience weaving the wool for your clothes—"

"Heaven forbid!"

"Merely because it was a womanly duty a century or so ago? Nowadays it would only be an expensive, time-and-money-wasting performance. I must show my womanliness in other ways. And so—you see the analogy? You see that your society for the Maintenance of the Tradition of Hospitality, or whatever you called it, would be as useless and as purely ornamental a society as those futile and sidetracked little organizations of which you were speaking, for the preservation of national handicrafts among the immigrants?"

One of the things that has kept the art of conversation alive in paterfamilias' home for thirty married years is his willingness to own himself beaten in argument. He did so now. But he looked at his wife's portières—they had been her great-grandmother's spreads, and they were homespun blue and white in a wonderful star design.

"You don't see their like any longer, do you, Mary?" he said. And Mary answered heartily: "No, you don't. They are beauties. Ah, it's a shoddy world we live in now!"



The Pretender

By Hapsburg Liebe

Author of "The Little Good," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. EMMETT OWEN

HATTIE LEE, I always thought, was about the prettiest gyrl I ever seen anywhar. All the young men and what bachelors thar was in the Slate Cove settlement was so deep in love with her that they'd lost most o' their appetites, and couldn't hardly sleep; and thar'd been more'n one fist-and-skull fight about her. But she didn't lean much to bein' fit over, Hattie didn't; jest as soon as she'd hear o' some o' the boys or old bachelors a-havin' a racket concernin' her, she'd refuse to even speak to the parties. What did she look like? She looked like a ripe peach, freckles and all; always a-laughin', and always had somethin' nice to say—she was shore a fine gyrl! If I'd 'a' been a young man, I'd 'a' trained my eye in her direction.

Now, away acrost the State line, and onknown to Hattie Lee, John Isaac Ellison—known as John Ike Ellison—had jest become of age, and with it into possession of the dandy mountain farm his pap'd left him on the Little Lorrel. John Ike and his Uncle Bill, his gyardeen, hadn't never got along—on account o' old Bill Ellison a-bein' jealous about that thar farm, and a durn fool besides, him always allowin' the farm ought 'o been hisn; so when John Ike was three times seven, he walks up to Bill, the old sour pickle, and says to him:

"Uncle Bill," he says, "I'm a-goin' to run the farm from now on to suit myself. You and Aunt Jinny is welcome

to stay as long as you live, and I'll take good keer of you; but I've got to do the farmin' to my own notion."

And he was right about it. Thar wasn't a better farmer in the whole country than him, young as he was. You see, his bein' young didn't count much ag'inst him; he was six feet high, and built like a beech tree, and tol'able good lookin'. Terrible feller to laugh, he was; went to bed a-laughin' and got up a-laughin'.

So old Bill Ellison got as mad as a hornet, and took his wife, and left the boy without nobody to keep house for him.

John Ike was as sharp as a brier. He could do 'most anything he'd ever tried to do. He'd made it a rule never to fall down on nothin'—and he never had, 'cept on makin' biscuits. He couldn't make biscuits to save his life, and he didn't like corn bread at all.

When Hite Blevins, slim and raw-boned, and one o' the devilishest fellers in the world, was turned down for good by Hattie Lee, he took a long coon hunt from the Slate Cove settlement, jest to forget. He happened up on John Ike's four-roomed log house one evenin', and axed if he could stay all night thar. John Ike took him in same as if he'd 'a' been kinfolks, but told him how as he was a-doin' his own cookin', and all.

After supper Hite lit his old cob pipe, which had shared his heart share and share alike with Hattie Lee, and



"John Ike," he says, "thar hain't but one way out o' yore troubles."

looked solemn acrost the hearth to John Ike.

"John Ike," he says, "thar hain't but one way out o' yore troubles. You want to cast yore eyes about you, pick out some right good woman, and git married to her."

"I know it," says John Ike; "but I don't know who to ax. Thar hain't no gyrls in this neck o' the woods that I want, on account o' them a-knowin' that I've got the finest farm in the county. You see, Hite, I want to marry a woman who'll take me jest for me, myself, and worldly goods be durned."

Hite looks at John Ike for a long time, a-puffin' at his old cob like a mountain afire. He thinks to hisself, of course: "If I cain't git Hattie Lee, I don't want none o' them thar other Slate Covers to git her, consarn 'em!"

Then he says out loud: "John Ike," he says, "over in my settlement acrost the State line thar is one o' the finest-

lookin' gyrls—and one o' the best gyrls, too—that ever wore calico. She's so fine, by gyar, that every onmarried man over thar is at pistols' p'int about her. Her name's Hattie Lee. You light out and go over thar and git acquainted, and see if you and her cain't make a match."

"I be hung if I don't go and take a look at her, anyhow," declares John Ike, a-settin' up straight. "Can she cook biscuits, Hite?"

"Cook biscuits!" hollers Hite Blevins. "Did you say *could* she cook biscuits? John Ike Ellison, by gyar, she can cook 'em so light that they'll blow acrost the room if you don't keep the winders shet up. Purty? Thuh great goodness! Sweetest little freckled nose—sweetest little mouth—hair what looks jest the color o' new cane molasses—eyes made out o' sky—not too slim and not too heavy set! Say, you come over thar, and don't let on but

what me and you is old friends, and that you've come to visit me. That's what you do, John Ike Ellison."

"I'll do it!" says John Ike, a-grinnin' pleasedlike. "I'll dress up fit to kill, and make a good impression the first time."

"Now, you better be keeful about dressin' up fit to kill," objects Hite. "Them thar fellers over thar'll run you off as shore as green apples, if you come all duded up."

"But I've got to spread on a little," says John Ike. "Of course, I've got to dress up. Say, what's the matter of me a-comin' as a young preacher friend o' yores, Hite? Them thar fellers won't run a preacher off, of course. Now, I'm not skeered of 'em, Hite; I jest don't want to go over thar and raise the old scratch and lose out with the gyrl, y'understand." Which was right, too.

"Shore, I understand," says Hite. "That's the very thing for you to do, John Ike; that's the very thing, shore."

You see, Ellison figgered that him a-supposin' to be a preacher would also cause Hattie to think that he was pore, so he'd know, if she agreed to marry him, it wouldn't be on account o' that thar fine farm o' hisn over on the Little Lorrel.

So the next day, after Hite had called his dogs and gone, John Ike drove off a few yearlin's to town and sold 'em at the stockyard to git money to dress up like a preacher. He was a confidin sort o' feller; tharfore, when he told the clothin' man what he was a-goin' to do, why, the clothin' man showed him a dead-black suit o' clothes with what we call a double-barreled, Jim-swinger coat—also a big plug hat. Yes, sir, a plug hat!

"You don't want to go up thar a-lookin' half dressed, Mr. Ellison," says this storekeeper. "You want to go like a shore-enough preacher; tharfore thar

hain't nothin' half as good for headwear as a plug hat. Try this on, and then take a view of yoreself in the glass, thar."

John Ike did, and that beegum shore did catch his eye proper.

"Wrap 'er up," he says. "I'll take 'er."

The big, strappin' young man in the Jim-swinger and the plug that made a sudden appearance in the Slate Cove settlement the next week, got the attentions of all eyes as he went a-walkin' up the road like he was makin' the very ground valuable by steppin' on it. He halted afore some feller who was a-waitin' at Jess Martin's blacksmith shop for a job o' hoss shoein', and axes to be showed to the residence of his esteemable friend and brother, Mr. Hite Blevins.

"Le's see," says the feller; "be you that thar preacher friend o' Hite's what Hite's been a-talkin' about all week?



"You don't want to go up thar a-lookin' half dressed, Mr. Ellison," says this storekeeper.



"Le's see; be you that thar preacher friend o' Hite's what Hite's been a-talkin' about all week?"

If you are, why, I guess, as I hain't got nothin' to do but to chaw tobacco and spit at grasshoppers, I can spare the time to show you whar Hite lives when he's at home. Come on!"

The boys at the shop had quit playin' mumblepeg and pitchin' hoss shoes, and was all a-pickin' the best place on John Ike's plug to shoot at and jest miss hide; but when they heerd that he was a preacher, they put all meanness out o' their minds. They was all pretty good boys when it come to bein' respectful to religious things, rough as they was.

Hite lived with his pap and mother a little ways up on the side o' the west ridge, in a tol'able nice three-roomed cabin. The feller took John up thar, whar John Ike found Hite a-settin' on a gallon crock ahind the house, a-pick-

in' the banjer, with a young hound dog in his lap and ten or a dozen more a-howlin' to the music. Hite jumps up, a-makin' a scatterment among the dogs, and grabs John Ike by the hand.

"Why," he says, plumb gladlike, "if it hain't Brother Ellison, as shore as green apples! I'll declare, if it hain't been a coon's age sence I seen you, Brother Ellison. Come right into the house, and see my pap and mother."

And as they went in, he whispered to John Ike, and told him that they was all the ones—jest them two—that knowed anything about the little game in hand.

The old folks was mighty religious people, and they took right to John Ike from the start. Mis' Bevins set Hite to wringin' young chickens' necks and diggin' young 'taters and the like, while old Grandpap Blevins talked over the Bible with the supposed-to-be preacher. It shore was lucky for John Ike Ellison that he'd been

brought up by good people, for his knowledge of the Good Book come in handy—and, besides, he'd been to school a little, and read a little, and was a born talker to boot.

When dinner come around, John Ike, a-bein' young and strong, and sort o' tired from the long walk from the Little Lorrel, eat so much dinner that he told the Blevinses he was shore he wouldn't need any more for several days. But he got mighty peart a little while later when Hite winked at him, and told him that if he didn't keer they'd go out the ridge and call on the Widder Lee and her daughter.

"Well, I reckon I'd jest as well begin to scrape up a little acquaintance with the esteemable people of Slate Cove," he says. "So, if it suits you, Brother Blevins, we'll go."

So they set out, John Ike and Hite did, after John Ike had promised to make the Blevins' home his stoppin' place while in the settlement.

Now, talk about homelike little cabins, with grapevines and gourd vines and marygolds and touch-me-nots, and everything as clean as you please—the Widder Lee had one. It set in a little clearin', around which grew the biggest hemlocks you ever seen. The old woman, dressed in light, figgered calico, with a round-cornered, white aporn, and her hair done up as smooth as a punkin rind, told John Ike and Hite to come right in. They did, and spent a hour or so in the pleasantest kind o' talkin'.

But finally the old woman told 'em she must be a-beginnin' supper, and also axed Hite to go down to the store for her. That left John Ike and Hattie to themselves, which didn't make John Ike the least bit mad, of course. But he was a little bashful on the start, when he found hisself alone with sech a dream of a gyrl. He'd set thar and trigger at his high collar, and now and then let his hands fall hard to his lap to hear his cuff buttons rattle. But pretty soon he got up nerve enough to ax Hattie if she wouldn't walk with him down to the spring to git a drink o' fresh water.

Hattie give him a smile that took his breath, and reached for her gingham bonnet.

The spring was in a cool, shady place, right under a big, green hemlock, with ferns and puccoons a-growin' jest above, and big gray rocks all around. After John Ike had dreened the drinkin' gourd, he set down on a big rock, a-settin' on his handkerchief, dudeliike, and axed Hattie Lee if she loved anybody.

Hattie twisted at her fingers, and turned red in the cheeks, a-lookin' sort o' funny to'ard John Ike. They was always somethin' about John Ike that wouldn't let you git mad at him, and I think Hattie felt it then; but, anyhow, she says back a little sassy:

"Tain't none o' yore business, sir!"

"That's a pretty way to talk to a

minister o' the gospel, now, hain't it?" says John Ike, half a-laughin'.

Hattie Lee 'peared to be took down some by what he'd said. You see, mountain folks respects preachers a good deal.

"I—I didn't mean to say that," she says, a-steppin' a step closter to John Ike. "I—I forgot, Brother Ellison. You was right; it wasn't no way for me to talk to you. But these fool boys around here is always a-pesterin' the life out o' me about gittin' married, and I git mighty tired of it. But, to answer yore question, I hain't in love with, nor promised to, nobody on this whole earth."

"Do you ever expect to be?" axes John Ike, sort o' soberlike.

"Some time," answers Hattie Lee, "I may git married. Brother Ellison, you a-bein' a good man makes it easier to talk to you. I mean to git married at the proper time, and not until then. You see, I want to be shore I'm a-marryin' a man what'll love me jest the same when I've give my prettiness to—my—my children—and hain't pretty no more. These boys here all thinks I'm awful pretty, which is the one and only reason they want me. I don't keer whether the man that gits me is very good lookin' or not; if he is jest as big inside as he is outside I'll be satisfied. Thar is one thing in this world that I could never stand, and that is a person a-pretendin' to be somethin' which he hain't. Brother Ellison, I always make up the biscuits for mother, and I 'spect I'd better go to the house."

John Ike Ellison suddenly found that the fun o' posin' as a preacher had all leaked away. Hattie Lee had opened his eyes to some things a heap more serious'n he ever thought of afore. What she'd said about pretendin' hit him square in the heart, like a bullet. When he got up to go back to the house he was a little pale. He couldn't confess; his acquaintance was too short, and she'd never 'a' forgive him. And, besides, hadn't she opened her sweet little heart to him, about the future; which was because she thought he was a preacher, and tharfore to be



"John Ike took Hattie's fan, and begun to fan her, all the time a-lookin' to'ard her and a-smilin'."

trusted? He felt plumb mean about it; still, he was so much in love with that thar little mountain jewel that he couldn't tell her all and run a risk o' losin' her.

Hattie left him in the best room, a-lookin' at the pictures in a old almanac which he'd picked up off o' the center table, and then went in the kitchen to make up the biscuits. I believe I told you that John Ike was a reg'lar fool about good biscuits. Well, at supper John Ike found that Hite had told the truth about Hattie a-knowin' how to make 'em. He bragged on 'em powerful, too, and Hattie blushed about it.

After supper John Ike got Hattie to walk down to the spring with him ag'in. It did beat anything how much he liked

that thar spring water! He set down jest whar he'd set afore. *

"Hattie," says John Ike, a-feelin' that he jest couldn't wait no longer to save his life, "Hattie, I hain't knowed you four hours, but I've eat yore biscuits, and I'm afeared I can't never forgit 'em. Hattie, little gyrl, I want you to make biscuits for me all o' my life!"

"Are you acquainted with our old preacher here?" axes Hattie, a-strippin' the leaves from a fern that she'd pulled.

"I've never been fooled in my judgment of mankind," John Ike goes on, "and you're one that I'd swear by."

"He preaches at eleven o'clock in the old log meetin'house on top o' the ridge," says Hattie, a little

pink in the cheeks, still a-strippin' ferns. "I want you to hear him to-morrow. He 'pears to be a mighty good man, Brother Ellison."

John Ike looked to'ard his shoes, and suddenly found out that one of 'em had been a-settin' in the water for five minutes.

"I'll be glad to go and hear him to-morrow," he says. "But, if you don't mind, I'd like to know what you think about makin' biscuits for me the rest o' my life."

"You could hire somebody to make biscuits for you," says Hattie. "I'd never marry any man jest to work for him."

John Ike got to his feet then. "Hattie," says he, "that was jest a sort o' bashful figger o' speech. Of course, I'd

love you, too. In fact, I do already—right now, little gyrl. And I always will, too. What's yore answer, Hattie?"

"I hain't knowed you long enough," says Hattie. "Hite told me you was a very fine man; but I want to know for myself. I'll watch you while you're here, and see if I think you're the—the one; and I'll give you my answer a week from to-morrow, after dinner—which will be Sunday evenin'. You can take me to meetin' to-morrow, to hear old Brother Reynolds preach, if you want to."

"If I want to!" John Ike almost hollers. "If I want to! My goodness alive! I want to!"

Well, the next day and the six days that follered it passed off all right, without nothin' happenin' 'cept that Hattie and John Ike got to thinkin' that each other was the only person alive. John Ike got to be pretty shore what her answer was a-goin' to be when the time come. He'd spent the days a-roamin' the mountains with Hattie, and the nights a-layin' awake down at old Grandpap Blevins' house, and a-wishin' that he'd never pretended. Still, he believed that Hattie would forgive him, now that he was shore she liked him.

It was pretty weather, the day on which John Ike was to git the girl's answer. Thar wasn't a cloud in the sky, and every bird in the whole country seemed to be out and a-singin'. John Ike went down to the Widder Lee's to go with Hattie to meetin', and found that Hattie was already dressed up and a-waitin' for him with a smile that started his heart to goin' like a saw-mill engine a-runnin' empty. She was a-standin' at the gate, with her back to it, a-lettin' on like she wasn't a-watchin' the path out o' the corner of her eye—which she was, of course.

"I come a little early," says John Ike, a-liftin' that thar plug hat like the King of England, "so's we wouldn't have to walk so fast."

Hattie looked up and smiled ag'in, and looked like if she'd 'a' said anything she'd 'a' jest told him the "Yes"

right thar. Then they set out on the crooked little path, a-walkin' slow and a-listenin' to the birds, now and then a-lookin' at each other, a-smilin', and a-catchin' their breaths a little. Have you ever been thar? That little breath catch is mighty sweet. I've been thar. A feller never forgits them times, the times when it seems like it's not a durned bit o' use to say anything at all.

Hattie and John Ike never said anything until they got in a few hundred yards o' the meetin'house. John Ike he stopped and picked a few little wild flowers, a-handlin' 'em as tender with his big, stout hands, like they was baby souls yit to be borned. When he give 'em to Hattie Lee, he says to her—says:

"Them's sweet, but they hain't half as sweet as you!"

And then he took her hand and pressed it up ag'inst him, and kissed it; and Hattie took it away from him and put it around his neck.

I was a-settin' in one of the two chairs in the pulpit, and old Tom Henson was a-settin' in the t'other'n, when this couple come in. Bein' supposed to be a preacher, John Ike come right on up to the front bench, him and Hattie, both a-blushin' and a-lookin' like only their feet was a-walkin' this sorrowful earth. I seen right then that John Ike Ellison had took the great prize; and I was sort o' glad of it, too, for I'd liked him from the very start. When they set down, John Ike put his plug hat on the edge o' the pulpit platform, rim up, and took Hattie's fan, and begun to fan her, all the time a-lookin' to'ard her and a-smilin'. And she was a-lookin' to'ard him and a-smilin', too. For their own sakes, I was glad their backs was turned to the congregation.

Well, the house filled up quick, and it got pretty warm, it a-bein' in the summertime. I seen people thar that I'd never seen thar afore in all o' my life, and most of 'em, 'specially the menfolks, looked mighty tickled about somethin'. When I got a glimpse o' that thar devilish Hite Blevins, who was a-standin' in the back end o' the house, I seen that he had somethin' on

his mind, and so I decided to watch him clost. He'd whisper a little now and then to some o' the other young fellers, and they'd all look like they was jest a-bustin' to laugh.

The fun wasn't long in commencin', either. Old Grandpap Blevins, who had fell in love with John Ike from the first, come a-limpin' up the aisle, a-wip-in' at his neck with a big red bandanna, and a-lookin' around for somebody. When he had set his eyes on John Ike Ellison, he smiled and nodded; then he went up to the pulpit and faced the congregation. Everybody got as still as you please when he raised one o' his hands to catch attention.

"Breth-ren and sis-tren," says Grandpap Blevins, in his cracked and shakin' voice, "our good old minister is a leetle under the weather to-day—you know he hain't never very stout—and he has requested that our visitin' friend, Brother John Ike Ellison, fill his place in the pulpit."

It was the work o' that thar devilish Hite Blevins. He had gone to the old preacher and told him that John Ike wanted to preach the mornin' sermon for him; and as the old preacher had a good ways to come, and as he was shore enough ruther feeble, he had been mighty glad o' the relief. Hite had then told his pap the same tale his pap had told the congregation, after which he had gethered up a bunch o' his friends and told 'em what was on foot. So most o' the menfolks—the young menfolks, that is—knowed about it, and was jest a-dyin' to see the circus commence.

At first you could 'a' lit a match on John Ike Ellison's face, it was that red and hot. He told me afterward that he had never been in sech a pickle in all his life afore. He said that two things kept a-chasin' each other through his mind: One was what Hattie had said about pretendin' to be what you wasn't; the t'other'n was that he'd always bragged that he hadn't never tackled anything that he hadn't done—'cept makin' biscuits. It was shore a

serious thing; them thar Slate Covers would 'a' set on John Ike like hounds on a b'ar if somethin' hadn't 'a' happened.

I seen it all. John Ike looked to'ard Hattie Lee, with the house as still as the inside of a grave. And, sir, by gyar! Hattie was that proud of him that she was mighty nigh a-cryin'! I seen her little mouth move, and I could make out the words she whispered to him as plain as if she'd 'a' spoke 'em out loud:

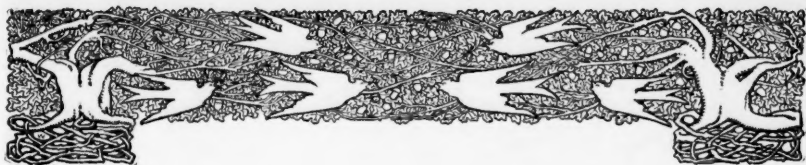
"Go on, sweetheart!"

John Ike Ellison told me he'd 'a' died a thousand times ruther'n disappoint her then. So what does John Ike do? Why, he takes a big-man grip on hisself, gits up, jerks the tails o' that thar Jim-swinger coat down, buttons it up, and pokes the fingers of one hand atween buttons, walks to the pulpit, faces the congregation, and looks it over as ca'm as you please! That's what John Ike done.

"Dearly beloved," he begins, a-sweepin' the faces afore him with them thar big, earnest eyes o' hisn, "this emergency has caught me onprepared, and, on that account, I shall have to ax you, one and all, to bear with me a little durin' my discourse. And I shall take for the subject of my talk the one word—*hypocritism*."

I'll never forgit it. John Ike had felt his own guilt, and thought over it and regretted it, until he understood the question mighty well. And, sir, by gyar! John Ike Ellison stood right up thar in that pulpit and delivered a sermon that shook the very mountain the meetin'house stood on! He was a-preachin' for life, for Hattie Lee, and for love of Hattie Lee, and it was a sermon that they still talk about over thar in Slate Cove. And at the end of it he stood right up thar, with the big old tears jest a-shinin' in his eyes, and told 'em the whole business.

Did they forgive him? I wish to goodness you could 'a' seen the presents the Slate Covers give that couple when they was married!



The Primrose Party Dress

By Edith Summers Updegraff

Author of "The Mysterious Lavender Notes," "The Skeleton in the Closet," etc.

IT was a lovely afternoon in early April, and we—that is, the whole of St. Agatha's, were out on our regular afternoon walk. As we drew near the Toddsville National Bank, I began to fidget, Genevieve Pitcher in front of me began to fidget; in fact, about ninety-nine per cent of the girls began to fidget. Why? Because we were about to pass a certain plate-glass window where the teller could be seen in profile, and we were all dippy about that teller. His name was E. F. Archer, but he was generally known among us as the Bright-hued One, because he has the most wonderful red hair—not a brick red, you understand, but a rich, dark, lustrous chestnut. His eyes are just the same color as his hair, and he has the nicest chin, and the broadest shoulders, and the best-pressed clothes of any young man in Toddsville.

I walk with Theodosia, my cousin, and Genevieve Pitcher walks next in front with Lois Maybury, who is a sort of shadow to her. Theodosia is one of the very few who doesn't care a hair-pin about the Bright-hued One, because she's the sort of girl who takes no interest whatever in boys. And Lois pretends not to care, because she knows she has no chance when Genevieve is around. All four of us are rather tall, so we are near the end of the line.

As the front ranks began to file past the window, I glanced sharply ahead, and saw the faces turn. Yes, practically every face turned toward that win-

dow with a look or a smile of expectancy. My own heart began to thump harder and harder, for we, too, were coming near the window. Then I saw Genevieve's face turn. Then my own face turned, almost against my will. And what did I see? Just the least flicker of an eyelash, just the faintest shadow of a smile on the Gibson lips of that bank teller.

The very same thing had happened before dozens of times. None of the other girls, however, ever saw an eyelash twitch or a smile flit across those Gibson lips. But always when Genevieve and I passed it happened. And, of course, Genevieve always said it was for her. And, of course, I always said it was for me.

This was the principal, but only one of the many points of disagreement between Genevieve and myself; for Genevieve Pitcher and I have had a feud on ever since we entered St. Agatha's. I can't stand her, and she can't stand me. We're opposites in every single thing; and the two and a half years that we've been bathed in learning's font at St. Agatha's have been spent in trying to get a rise out of each other.

In the first place, Genevieve is one of those girls who always gets ten in order and another ten in correct deportment, two things that, try as I may, I never can get ten in. You see, on the last day of every month, we are given marks for five things, the knowledge and practice of which five things



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are considered in our school to be the whole duty of a young lady. Said five things are: Neatness, order, amiability, correct deportment, and observance of rules. Neatness means personal cleanliness, and of course *nobody* likes to get less than ten for that, and very few ever do. It reflects on your upbringing to have it intimated that you don't take a bath often enough, or that your hair would be the better for washing, or that your finger nails ought to be out of mourning. Most girls get ten in amiability, too; it's generally easy enough to do that. In observance of rules, it's considered an honor by most of us to get low marks. What are rules for, anyway, but to be busted?

But oh, you order, and oh, you correct deportment! Once every month,

quite unexpectedly, of course, the teacher on the hall comes into your room, and pokes and ferrets around, and pulls out your bureau drawers, and sticks her nose into your clothes closet and your shoe box, and your sewing bag, and everything else you've got. A regular inquisition! And if everything isn't in apple-pie order, biff! goes one mark, or two marks, or even three marks, as the case may be. Now, I am one of those unfortunate people who *can't* keep their things in order; it just simply isn't in me. And I do so envy people who can. Genevieve can.

But the worst bugbear of all is correct deportment. You have to act just so at table. You have to act just so when

you're out walking. You have to act just so in church. You have to act just so even at recreation—if the teacher happens to be anywhere near. And, last and worst of all, you have to act just so at receptions.

Every month we have one of those awful receptions—not a real reception, just a fake one to teach us how to act, so that we'll become social lights after we leave school. Sometimes the reception takes the form of a tea; sometimes it's a wedding reception, sometimes a dinner, sometimes an evening party. And always it's a fake. Everything's imaginary, including the edibles which are always supposed to lend zest to such affairs. Girls who, on the campus, slap you on the back and call you "Piggy," or "Mutt," or "Woggerbug,"

or whatever your nickname may be; or who, in the privacy of their own rooms, whisper their heart secrets in your ear, are expected, during these receptions, to give you the high handshake, address you as Miss Whatyoucallem, inquire politely and solicitously after your health and your relatives, and mention the weather and other equally interesting and important topics. Imagine the awful farce of the thing! But if you want to get ten in correct deportment, you've got to do it, and do it right, too.

Genevieve does it right; she's a wonder at it. Most of the girls hate the receptions like poison, and take turns at being sick in order to escape them. But Genevieve looks forward to them as though they were holidays or hampers from home.

You see, Genevieve's great ambition is to shine in society. She's always talking about blue books, and social usages, and week-end parties, and correct dress for this and that and the other occasion, and what Lord Algonon Somethingorother said, and what Lady Gwendolen Whatyumajig did, and all that sort of silly English-imitation stuff. And when you make fun of her, she gets as mad and insulted as a wet hen. And I do dearly love to make fun of her.

And what complicates all this and makes it ten times worse is that Genevieve and I look alike. Gentle reader, as the storybooks say, think what it must be like to resemble your dearest enemy! To be sure, Genevieve is thinner than I am, and paler, and her features are a little more angular than mine, and her eyes are black, while mine are brown. But, nevertheless, we look enough alike to be twins. We have the same-shaped features and faces, the same hair, the same figure, the same general appearance. People sometimes mistake us for each other. It's awful!

When we got back from our walk on that particular afternoon, and were going upstairs, a boy came up along with us, bringing a big bandbox addressed to both Theo and me. I guessed that it

was our new party dresses, which we had been expecting for some time, and our party dresses it turned out to be.

"Oh, Theo, aren't they both just dandy!" I chortled with delight, as I drew first hers and then mine out of the box.

"They *are* nice," opined Theo, with quiet satisfaction, as she took hers in her hand to examine it more closely.

They were indeed lovely. Theo's was pale blue; she's fair, you know, and pale blue is her color. And mine was yellow—the softest, palest, primrose yellow. And it was trimmed with wreaths and knots of tiny, pale-pink and yellow roses, and it was a peach!

"I bet either of them will beat any of Genevieve Pitcher's dresses all to a frazzle," I gloated, as I stood before the mirror, holding mine up in front of myself to get the general effect. "Mark my words, Genevieve'll be in here in no time, for she saw the boy bringing up the box."

I had scarcely uttered my prophecy when there came a knock at the door.

"Come in," called Theo. And, sure enough, it was Genevieve, followed by Lois.

"Hello, Gen! Hello, Lois!" Genevieve hates above everything to be called "Gen" or "Jenny." "I knew you'd be along to have a look at our dresses. What do you think of 'em?"

"It isn't at all polite to pass opinions on people's clothes, or even to seem to notice them," returned Genevieve, with her sharp little nose in the air and her sharp, black eyes critically scrutinizing the two dresses. "But of course, if you ask me, I'll say just what I think: Theo's is more stylish, and made of nicer material; that silk voile is all the rage this year. But there's a something I rather like about yours. That primrose color is all out of style, but it's certainly very becoming to a dark person." Genevieve is dark. "And of course the skirt is too narrow; they're making them considerably fuller this season. And those rose-wreath trimmings aren't used much any more. Still, I like it—pretty well."

"Well," I answered, feeling my face

grow slightly hot, "the dress is good enough for me. I have no ambition to be an advance guard of fashion, and try to beat Paris to it. I'd hate to be an animated fashion plate, anyway."

"Every one according to her taste," snapped Genevieve sententiously, and stalked out of the room, followed, as always, by Lois.

"Believe *me*, Theo," I said, when the door was closed behind them. "Genevieve has cast eyes of covetousness on that dress of mine. Whenever she goes out of her way to make acid remarks about a thing, you may be sure she wants it herself. She fancies that that shade would be becoming to her style of beauty. You wait and see if she doesn't get one like it before the term is out."

One afternoon, about two weeks after this little episode, Theo and I, calculating cutely that it was about time for the teacher's monthly visit of inspection, had set about having a grand cleaning up.

"For patience sake!" exclaimed Theo suddenly, as she emerged from the clothes closet with her blue party dress in her hand. "Just look, Betty, at this dress! It's all soiled around the bottom; and here's a little tear in one of the sleeves! I'm sure I didn't do that at the Episcopal church sociable, and that's the only thing I've worn it to. You know I'm *very* careful of my clothes."

I couldn't help feeling a wicked little thrill of joy ascend my spine at the sight of Theo's discomfiture. For my none too carefully kept clothes are generally in sad contrast to the disconcerting cleanness and wholeness of Theo's.

"I know you're careful, Theodosia," I said, "but you must have done it by accident. How else could it have happened? It certainly does look pretty soiled around the bottom for one wearing. Now, I took such care of mine that—"

Here I brought my primrose dress from its hanger in the closet.

"Why, holy cats!" was all I could say. I simply held the dress out at arm's length and stared at it. It was

all crushed up and soiled around the bottom worse than Theo's. And it had a big stain right in the middle of the front breadth that looked as if it had been made by pink ice cream.

"Theo, these dresses are bewitched! I was *so* careful of mine because I wanted to keep it nice for things in the Easter vacation."

"So was I," mourned Theo. "But what good did it do?"

"Well, I suppose we simply weren't as careful as we thought. The dresses are longer than we've been in the habit of wearing them, and there *was* pink ice cream at the sociable. The only thing we can do now is to take them down to the pressing room, and gasoline and iron them out."

We took them down the next afternoon, which was Saturday, and were delighted to find that they both cleaned beautifully. I was busy pressing the waist part of mine when suddenly the iron ran up against a snag. I examined the waist to find out what was the trouble, and discovered that what seemed to be a piece of pasteboard had been slipped in between the silk and the lining. This couldn't have been done by the dressmaker for stiffening purposes, because it was one of those soft dresses that require no stiffening whatever. It was a foreign body, all right, so I slipped two fingers down and pulled it out.

I took just one look at the thing, and started to utter an exclamation, but caught myself in time. There were other girls in the pressing room besides Theodosia, and this was something to keep quiet about. So I slipped it quickly into the front of my shirt waist, and went on pressing as if nothing had happened. If there had been a girl within six feet of me, though, she would have heard my heart thumping.

When Theo and I were in our room again, and the dresses were put back in the closet, I went over to the door and locked it.

"What are you doing that for?" inquired Theodosia, looking up from a French composition which she had laboriously started to translate.

"Because, Theodosia, my trusty pal, we have important and secret business on hand. Theo, those dresses were worn by some other girl, or girls, and they were worn to a dance. This is what I found sticking in the front of mine when I was pressing it."

I fished the piece of pasteboard out of the front of my shirt waist, and we examined it together. It was a pale-blue dance card for a ball given by the Toddsville yachting club on the fourth of April, nineteen hundred and eleven.

"Last Tuesday!" exclaimed Theodosia.

"Precisely, last Tuesday," I confirmed. "You remember how it was advertised in the *Courier* and on posters in the post office and the railway station, and all over town. All the girls were crazy to go because they thought they'd have a good chance to meet the Bright-hued One there. He belongs to the club, you know. But I didn't suppose any one would really dare to try to go. Suppose Doctor Higgs had caught them!"

"Perhaps some of the servants—" began Theo.

"I don't believe it," I interrupted. "I have a feeling that it was two of the girls, and I bet you anything I know which two it was."

"Why not see if we can't find out some more from the dance card itself," suggested Theodosia sagely.

Up to this time we had only half examined the program, which was all filled up with men's names scrawled in pencil in every kind of different handwriting. We now began to examine the names more closely.

"E. F. Archer," said Theo significantly, indicating dance No. 4 with the point of an orange-wood stick.

"The Bright-hued One! Just as I expected!" I exclaimed. "Let's see how often he's on. E. F. Archer—E. F. Archer—E. F. Archer—E. F. Archer—

He's on five times altogether. Think of it! Oh, I'd give my eyeteeth to be perfectly sure who *she* was."

Having seen all there was to see on the inside of the dance card, I took it from Theodosia, and scrutinized the front and back. On the back was some writing, very small and dim, as if done with one of those awfully hard pencils. I went to the window, and puzzled over it for a long time before I made it out,



"I simply held the dress out at arm's length and stared at it."

but finally I got it. This is what it was:

DEAR LADY IN PRIMROSE: Won't you please meet me at Danby's at 7 p. m. on Saturday; and won't you please wear that charming dress? E. F. A.

And underneath it was written, in a different hand, a hand that I recognized:

I'll try.

I read this to Theo, and pointed out



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the "I'll try." "That's Genevieve's handwriting, or I'll eat my hat. I'd know that little sharp, cramped hand anywhere."

"So would I," assented Theo. "But what are we going to do about it?"

"What are we going to do about it? Why, Theo, we're going to queer her game. We're going to make her bite the dust. Do you realize that this is Saturday, the day she's to meet him? Well, she hasn't got the dress yet, and, what's more, she isn't going to get it. Also, I doubt very much if she's going to meet him at all."

Suddenly somebody knocked at the door.

"Sh-h-h-h-h!" I whispered to Theo. "Be doing your French translation." Then I sauntered to the door, turned the key in the lock, and nonchalantly opened it. Genevieve was standing in the doorway.

"Oh!" she breathed, politely excusing herself. "I'm sorry if I interrupted you in anything particular. I didn't

know the door was locked."

"It's nothing, Gen," I explained off-handedly. "Only Theo's rather fussy when she's doing her lessons, and so many of the girls come butting in without stopping to knock. They're not all as polite as you, you know."

"I just ran in to ask you for the loan of your manicure scissors. I broke mine the other day opening a pot of real Scotch marmalade that Lady Julia Peabody sent me."

"All right, Jenny, dear; here's the manicure scissors. But tell that story about Lady Julia to the little fishes."

"Mark my words, Theo," I said, when Genevieve had disappeared with the manicure scissors, "she came to get that dress, and she would have got it if we hadn't been here. She'll be back again more than once before seven o'clock this evening. But she'll only get that dress over my dead body. I won't leave this room for a second between now and then."

"But how about walking?"

"I won't go walking; I'll play sick. When Miss Simpkins comes to my name on the roll, you speak up and tell her I'm sick, and when they send up to find out what's the matter with me I'll be in bed with a headache."

"But I don't like to tell a lie," objected Theodosia.

"Theodosia, if you're not a good enough friend to me to tell a few fibs for me now and then, you're no sport. It's five minutes of walking time now. Go on, and be sure you look innocent when you do it."

"All right; I will this once," said

Theo magnanimously, and went to get her hat and coat.

As soon as she was gone, I slipped off some of my clothes, lay down on the bed with the comforter over me, and began to read "Jane Eyre." I hadn't read more than half a chapter when there came a knock at the door. I shoved the book under the pillow, and called to whoever it was to come in. It was Miss Smart, the teacher on our hall, who had been sent to find out what was the matter with me. Yes, I had a bad headache—but not so very bad. Oh, no, it was nothing more than just that; I was subject to such headaches, and knew just how they acted. Of course, I didn't need a doctor. Did I want anybody to sit by me? No, no, not at all. What I needed was to lie quietly by myself and rest. Finally, to my great satisfaction, Miss Smart pulled the blinds down, hoped the headache would soon pass off, and tiptoed out of the room. As soon as she was gone I put the blinds up again and went on reading my book.

I'd got one chapter finished, and started on another, when along came knock number two; and, sure enough, it was Genevieve, as large as life.

She started back when she saw me, in astonishment that even she couldn't conceal, for apparently she hadn't heard my: "Come in!"

"Oh, excuse me. I—I beg your pardon! I just came to put back the nail scissors. I supposed you'd be out walking with everybody else."

"Why, Gen, old girl, you don't mean to say you think you're the *only* person who's clever enough to escape walking now and then. There *are* others."

"Oh, to be sure. Only one can't play sick *all* the time. I'm sure I wish one could; those walks are *so* tiresome. Odd that we both happened to get off on the same day."

"Yes," I answered; "very odd. By the way, where are the manicure scissors? I'll use up some of this spare time in giving my nails a good trimming."

"Oh, for goodness sake, if I haven't forgotten to bring them! I must be

getting softening of the brain," exclaimed Genevieve. And she darted back across the hall to her room, and brought the scissors.

About half past four, just before the school got back from walking, she knocked again.

"I thought I'd run over and see if you'd like to come and have some cocoa in my room. Miss Smart won't be around before dinner time, anyway."

"No, thanks, Genevieve, my angel. This unusual display of friendliness on your part quite overwhelms me. But I'm awfully comfortable where I am, and I've got a dandy book, and I don't intend to stir until I have to."

We have dinner at half past five at St. Agatha's. About ten minutes after the bell rang Genevieve appeared again.

"Oh, you didn't go down to dinner! Aren't you awfully hungry? I didn't go, either, because I told Miss Smart my headaches always lasted at least six hours. But I've got some crackers and cheese and a can of pressed chicken in my room. Come over and we'll have supper together."

"No, thanks! Theo promised to fill her sleeves for me. Eat up the crackers and cheese and pressed chicken yourself. You need 'em, poor child, you're so thin."

But even this insult didn't make Genevieve bridle. She departed meek as a dove, with the meekness born of disappointment.

That was her final attempt to get the dress. When I next saw Genevieve it was in Danby's restaurant, at precisely seven p. m.

She was standing near the door when I entered, uncertainly fingering her hand bag. She had on the only yellow dress she owned, a *passé* one about three years old, which she had never liked because it didn't fit her well. She had a little bit of rouge dabbed on her pale cheeks, but in the bright daylight that still lighted the place any one could easily see just what it was. Altogether she looked so wilted and lugubrious that I couldn't help feeling a little bit sorry for her. I had on my primrose



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As I came through the door, our eyes met.

The next moment there was a stir somewhere about halfway up the restaurant. I looked and saw the Bright-hued One getting up hastily from a table near one of the windows. For a second or two my heart stopped beating. Then I saw that he was making straight for me, and had not even noticed Genevieve.

"I—I'm tickled to death—I mean I'm very much pleased that you came. I was afraid you wouldn't—that you'd conclude on second thoughts that I was too nervy." He was blushing and stam-

mering and falling over his feet all the time that he was leading me up to the little table.

"To tell the straight truth," he admitted, when we were seated and the waiter had gone away with our order, "this's strictly between you and me—I never asked a girl out to dinner in my life before, and I'm not sure I know how to act. But we weren't strangers even when we met at the dance. I'd seen you out walking so often that I felt that we were pretty well acquainted."

In the meantime, what do you suppose Genevieve had done? Had she gone home? Not she! Genevieve is positively the most brazen thing I ever

knew in my life. After a moment's hesitation, caused, I suppose, by the shock my unexpected presence gave her, she walked up and took a table right next to ours. And there she sat all through the meal, with her back to us and her best ear pricked up to hear everything we were saying.

The Bright-hued One looked twice as nice near at hand as he ever did in profile through the teller's window, and we sat and ate and chattered about anything that we happened to think about, and had a glorious time. The food alone was enough to open heaven's gate to me after months of the awful fodder they hand out to us at school. But all the time I kept asking myself: "Is it me or the dress that he thinks he recognizes? Is it me or the dress?" I thought I'd put out a few feelers in that direction, so I said:

"I don't believe you've noticed me much out walking. What sort of a girl do I walk with?"

"A fair girl in a gray hat and suit," answered the Bright-hued One promptly. Oh, joy, it was Theo!

"But there's a girl just in front of you who looks very much like you," continued he. "I've sometimes wondered if she's your sister."

"No," I answered. "Everybody says she looks enough like me to be my sister, but she isn't any relation to me."

"I'm glad she isn't," answered the Bright-hued One. "Do you know, there's something about the looks of that girl that gives me shivers up and down my back. She's so pale, and lean, and snaky looking."

I took a look out of the corner of my eye at Genevieve's back, and I knew by the ominous quietness of her knife and fork that she had heard.

"Oh, she's a nice girl," I answered brightly. "She knows *all* about good manners, and proper dress, and society, and the British peerage, and that sort of thing."

"Confound good manners, and proper dress, and society, and the British peerage," answered the Bright-hued One. "I suppose if a fellow she hadn't been properly introduced to had asked

her out to dinner, she never would have gone."

"Oh, I don't know about that," I answered, with another side glance at Genevieve's back. The knife and fork were still silent, and one ear and part of her cheek and neck which I could see from where I sat were blood red. Even as I looked she reached for her hand bag, got up hastily, and hurried down the aisle toward the door.

The next day was monthly reception day. We had all assembled for the pestiferous thing, and everything was in full swing, when I happened to notice Genevieve sitting stiffly in a corner.

I made my way over to her.

"Why so pale and silent, dearest Jenny?" I inquired solicitously. "Surely your activities need not cease. Surely there are other dresses that you can steal, and other conversations that you can overhear if you take pains to get in a good position. Cheer up; all is not lost. Of course, it's perfectly true that listeners never hear any good of themselves, and also little pitchers are notorious for having large ears. But why not, if they like it?"

I offered her the high handshake in leave-taking, but, instead of accepting it, she jumped up, turned her back on me, and started to walk away. Unfortunately for her, Doctor Higgs, our principal, happened to be near, and noted Genevieve's breach of courtesy.

"I'm very sorry, Miss Pitcher," I heard her say. "I am sorry indeed, and considerably surprised; but I will be forced to subtract two in amiability and two in correct deportment from your total marks for the month. I trust that this will not happen again."

Poor Genevieve! She was sure getting it from every quarter!

That month, by a special effort, just to show Genevieve that I could do it, I got ten in everything except observance of rules.

I've told this story just as it happened, and I'm pretty well satisfied with the way it came out. But I'm not altogether sure whether the joke was on Genevieve or the Bright-hued One or me.



Larry's Affinity

by
Helen Baker Parker

ILLUSTRATED BY H. HAYGARTH LEONARD

KATY came running over to my room yesterday morning, all excited. "Come, Delia!" she says. "Come, quick!"

"Is it any of the twins?" I asked.

"No! It's the twins' father! I was putting away his new tie, when I found it." She picked one of the littlest twins out of the flour bin, took me to the bedroom, and opened the top drawer of the chiffonier.

There it was, on a sheet out of the book Katy writes about the twins' diseases in. There were words crossed out, and others written in, all kind of mixed, and blanks left like there used to be in storybooks before they wrote the d—n and h—l right out:

"Your blue eyes"—Katy's are black—"are—calling me. When—you and I together—across the blooming heather— You are my heart's desire," and more not easy to understand on account of words being left out.

"What do you make of it?" Katy asked.

"He's got an affinity," I says.

"Delia," she complained, "you always was suspicious of menfolks."

"Well," I says, "what do I read the *Tribune* for? I've come to a few conclusions."

"Well," Katy took the shears out of one of the twins' mouths, "if you had two sets of twins to take care of, instead of a yellow cat that sleeps all day, you'd come to something beside conclusions. I never get time to read the papers, and I don't believe that Larry—" But she looked on the chiffonier, and there it was—a "human document," as the *Tribune* says.

"You think, then, Delia—" Katy began.

"I think," I finished for her, "it's an affinity." And I was excited! I wished I'd been born a detective, instead of an old-maid dressmaker. I'd read in the *Tribune* about affinities so much, and now here was one! It was the first one that had ever come my way. She suspected it, too, first thing, Katy did, I'm sure, but she wanted to let on it was one of those brain storms, one of those devastating equalnoxious that come in the spring and fall of a man's career.

"What would you do?" she asked, anxious. Katy had always kept close home like all these wives of brain stormers.

"Is he cross to you?" I asked, ready to do violence to any one that was cruel to Katy.

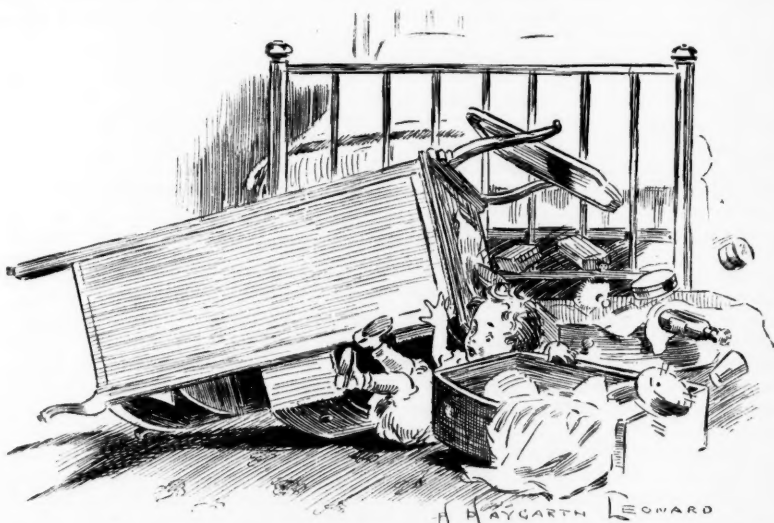
"That's just it," she says, crying on the baby's head. "He's so cruel good to me! I don't know where he got the idea of it."

"There's a regular epidemic of it, I see by the *Tribune*," I says. "Those things are catching on account of this hypnotism I read so much about. You don't keep up on such things, Katy, but it's in the air. You read one day about a suicide or murder, divorce or anything like that, and you watch, and the next day there'll be another." But Katy didn't hear me on account of one of the littlest twins wanting to see what was on top of the chiffonier. He pulled out the two bottom drawers, and climbed on them like a ladder, and—we didn't know how it happened, but it all came over on him, and it was like digging in the ruins of Pompeii before we got away the bureau, and all the different drawers, and the pieces of glass, and the ink bottle. When I left, Katy was singing him to sleep, and happy that he wasn't killed.

It's queer about children that way. They seem to make a woman forget every other trouble. I often think Katy

hasn't developed the way she ought to. I expect that's what's the matter with all these women that have such awful things happen to them. They don't develop their minds. It seems as though Katy's whole conversation is about second summers, and eye-and-stomach teeth, and flannel bands; and I guess, when all's said and done, these things don't hold a man.

Well, Larry Lanagan's brain storm is the most exciting thing that ever came to pass in the Harmony Flats. It gives us something to think of beside the janitor that has the morpheus habit, and the steam heat that seem's though it will just freeze us up completely. Larry has callers nearly every night, though he is mostly out. And Katy'll say, her hands all covered with flour and rings—Katy, in spite of the twins, is still terrible fond of jewelry—"He's dropped down to the corner for a cake of yeast." And then, when they sit round and watch for him, she'll say: "You'd better not wait. He's met with a man, most likely. You know what a man he is for politics!"



"We didn't know how it happened, but it all came over on him."

around, and eat green wall paper, and there was nothing at all to worry about any more, and it seemed as though Katy's mind snapped back like an elastic that's been stretched. And Katy says to me, "Well, Delia?" and I knew she meant, "*Who is the affinity?*"

"I can't stand it!" she said. "I'll go into a decline, and what'll become of the twins?"

"You're tired," I said, "with the twins' measles."

"No," she says, "it ain't what you do with your hands or your back that wears a person out; it's what you do with your head."

"Don't think it, Katy," I says, "you'll think it on you, and the affinity on Larry. Concentrate, Katy, concentrate!" But I expect it's hard to think health, and peace, and how all is love and love is all, when your husband has got an affinity.

Larry has invited us to a show, vaw-dyvil, Katy and me. It'll be two weeks from to-night.

"Larry wants me to wear a dress showing my skin some, my chest you know, Delia," Katy says to me, crying in her apron. "He's got seats down in front, and he don't want to be ashamed of me. I tell you, Delia, he's in love with one or more of those actresses. *I know it. I had a dream last night!* I woke up near midnight, and there she was standing by the biggest twins' bed. Blue eyes she had, and yellow hair, and a blue dress with a sash hanging down over one hip. And Larry still out!"

These days Katy looks like one of those early Christian martyrs that's going to be flung to a beautiful young lioness. She hasn't anything low cut, being a home woman, so she's taken out the yoke of a green serge, and it looks surprising handsome. Katy has a lovely neck and chest. To me, Katy is a good deal handsomer than the women I see in the *Sunday Tribune*. And I can't make out why women you wouldn't trust your family wash with, if it wasn't for their pearl chains and willow plumes, have such good times, and Katy has just the twins and worry.

Well, it's all over, and I'm so excited I have asthma terrible. The night came at last. Katy got a neighbor woman to stay with the twins, and we went. Katy said at first she just couldn't, never having been out without at least one twin for five years. She kept talking about them, and wondering if they had kicked out, or eaten anything during the day without her knowing it, or if they were having croup, because her book said that a child that never had it before was apt to sit up in bed after being asleep a few hours, and clutch at the air, blue in the face, and gasping for breath; and Katy wanted to telephone the neighbor woman about the ipecac on the top shelf of the pantry, but Larry said, "Forget it!" and *before long she did!*

Larry was absent-minded, too. Seemed like the machinery of him was too big for the size of the plant, and, after we got set, Larry he puffed like he was all ready to explode in the boiler room, and he was red as a 'tack of appleplexy. Katy dug him with her bare elbow.

"Brace up," she says. "If I can stand it, you can."

Well, the pink-velvet curtain went up, and things began to be doing. There were dogs that cut up like men, coming to their master without being called, and men that maneuvered like dogs on all fours with acrobatic feet. There were the La Polonette sisters, six of them of the same age, about sixteen, seemed like, unless you aimed at them with one of those magnifying glasses. They danced a bally, I think you call it, and sang and smiled, and yet not as though they were happy, but all alike and constant, as though the smile was drawn on them with a red lead pencil. There was a little play, short, with a divorce in it, and more bally, and all the while Katy looking first at one, then at the other of those doors where they were let loose on the stage, like the openings were the front and back doors to hadeez.

And along at the last, out came a girl. Well! I'll never ferget her, not if I get to be a hundred, and I guess Katy won't, nor Larry!

"That's the one, *that's the one!*" he says, leanin' forward, and clutching the seat in front, and unintentional pinching the back of a fat woman where she spilled over the chair.

The girl's eyes were blue, sure enough, and her hair was yellow, yellow as gold, and heaps and heaps of it, and you can't make me believe 'twas wig. She was the prettiest thing I ever put my eyes on, and she made me kind of sad, the way a pretty woman always makes a plain one feel, kind of "Oh, well, what's the use, anyway?"

She was all dressed in baby blue, with blue slippers and blue stockings, and a rose in her hair. She danced some, and then she stood still, and hooked up her coughure, and hitched her waistline down, and began to sing. Sing! Well! Larry says, "That's the one!" again, and Katy pushed the hatpins in and out of her hat, but no one saw her but me, for every one else was listening to that girl sing. "Poor Katy," thinks I, "it's an awful thing to lose a husband like Larry Lanagan down the throat of a canary bird like that!" But pretty soon Katy was listening, too. In a few minutes, she looked real resigned. Resignation ain't being willing; it's being helpless.

The girl had a queer voice at first, seemed's though, kind of talking; and thinks I to myself, "She'll never be able to hit the high spots." But she was a bird, and a cloud, and a diving bell, and a flying machine, all done up in a couple yards of blue veiling tied with a little silk sash hanging down over one hip. She dove down nearly to China with that voice of hers, picking up pearls and clumps of gold as she went, and all at once she took a notion to fly, and up she went, and sat on the moon, with her little slippers hanging over—and played with the stars, and dropped them down one by one.

Seemed's though it ought to have been a man singing, though, for you could just hear him saying terrible loving things to some woman not present. I can't remember it all, though I've got it written down on the back of a pattern, but it was something about look-

ing across the long, long years, and seeing her through a mist of tears, the way she stood there in the heather, all in sunny, blossoming weather, and they said good-by there, he and she, and watched the sea, and ah, me! ah, me! the seas divide, and something about the world being cruel wide.

In the second verse, she had the man still looking through the long, long years—honest, the way she sang "looking through the long, long years" would make your eyes ache—and, seeing her through a mist of tears, and about his love being deeper than the sea, and a whole lot wider, and nothing ever dividing them, and the heart of her being always home to him in any land where, on account of their going hand in hand, it's always blossoming weather, and a lot repeated many times about her still being his sweetheart—Kate!

Well, when she came down to the landing, everybody clapped like a flying ship had sailed way over the Atlantic Ocean, and up around the north pole, and got back to Twenty-second Street in time to go to work without busting anything. I just leaned back and remembered how tight my collar was. I never would have believed the human voice could cut up like that. Then some one way up under the attic roof called, "Larry Lanagan!" And everybody looked at the programs, and I found mine under my feet. There it was, all printed out—the name of him in black letters, big as life: "The latest song hit by Mr. Lawrence Lanagan!"

Then everybody clapped loud and long, and the pretty thing down on the stage, she waved her little fingers at him, and up he got. He was the handsome sight! Kate, she had her hands folded in her lap, like the twins do when they're saying their prayers, winking her eyes rapid until she had to get her handkerchief, for water spots her green serge.

Going home, Larry was the only one that seemed comfortable. Katy and I acted as though we had something out of the zoo that wasn't labeled yet. But that boy Larry joked and cut up something scandalous.

"Well, Katy, my girl," he says, "wasn't that a fine present for you? I wanted to surprise you."

"You did," says Katy, "you did!"

"But talk about a man keeping a secret!" says Larry. "I'd wake up nights and find myself talking it in my sleep! And first thing in the morning, I'd look in the glass to see if I'd broke out with it, like the twins with the measles. And I'd get up and leave the table, half starving. You see, I had a chance to be foreman if I took a night course in engineering, and so I went at it tooth and nail. I didn't say anything about it, because I wanted to surprise you, and I'm going to next Monday morning! Foreman and twenty-dollar raise, by jingo!"

"Well, one night I was sitting there, thinking of you—and the twins—and old times, when we were just engaged, you know, and—well, sir, by thunder, words came in my head all at once, those words that little young one sang on the stage! It took me sudden, just like—like—appendicitis, or anything like that. I wrote 'em down, and I worked 'em over, and I had a deuce of a time, because I lost some of the pages I had it on. But when it was done, I showed it to Jake—you know Jake, that has something the matter with his joints and dances in vawdyvil—and he says, 'Holy smoke! Give it here and lemme show it to Biehrstein! I bet he'll buy it off you!' And he did, by ginger! Five dollars and three free seats, and



"She waved her little fingers at him, and up he got."

they'd have given me more, but they said it cost a lot to—to—hang it, what's the word?—*produce* it. It was just like a disease the way it took hold of me, Katy, but the fever's passed, and I'm feeling natural." And he kissed her, square in the electric light, and the moon shining, too.

"I'll never keep anything from you again!" he says.

"You'd better not," says Katy. "It's been awful hard on you. Myself, I've been galavanting round, and having such a good time I never noticed. And I ought to have been up waiting for you, with a piece of pie and a cup of coffee!"

"Katy," says Larry, "what you think I bought you with the money?"

"Living's high, and there's the twins," says Katy, looking wistful in a window

where there were some of those bargain diamonds on the installation plan.

He opened a white box, and out came a little gold heart. Katy put it on, and laughed, and cried all at the same time.

She looked up at Larry—I never noticed before what a little thing she is. The moonlight was on her face, and her eyes—I had to look away—it made me feel the way I do with the littlest twins.

"Larry," Katy says, "I wish I was pretty, like that girl that sang, and I wish I could sing."

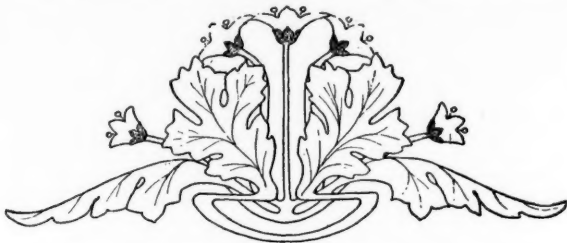
He kissed her again, right on the street.

"What!" says Larry, "you don't mean that young one with the yellow wig? Why, there's hundreds and hun-

dreds of them! They're in every five-and-ten-cent show in this town, and every other town—but—why—there's only *one* of you!

"Do you think there's anybody on earth beside you could cook the way you can, and sew, and shuffle the dollars so they cover up all the bare spots, and have such babies as you've had, and know what's apt to ail 'em every breath they draw, and what to do about it, and never a good night's sleep for five solid years? And *looks!* Why, Katy, she couldn't hold a candle to you! And *sing!* Why, I'd rather hear you sing one of them little, sleepy songs you sing one night than all her highest notes.

"Well, Katy, I guess we got to be hurrying on home to the twins!"



A Woman's Taste in Literature

WHEN it comes to springing surprises, Mrs. Nicholas Longworth, the daughter of Colonel Roosevelt, is the most prominent woman in Washington society to-day. Original in her ideas, and full of a sense of humor, she is constantly branching out with glass heels on her slippers, or new color schemes in her costumes, and unusual effects in dressing that keep the society reporters and newspaper women on the jump for fear that they will miss a good story if they lose sight of her.

It has become a proverb in Washington in the newspaper offices that if you see Alice Longworth on the street, and follow her, there is a ten-to-one chance that she will provide material for an interesting item.

One day this winter she drove up to a well-known book store, and, springing out of her electric runabout, disappeared among the new and highly colored volumes displayed for sale. The natural inference was that she was in search of the latest French novel or the most reliable authority on bridge whist. But the salesman soon found this to be a mistake, and he had erred so widely that, when she voiced her request, the shock was about all he could stand.

Asked Alice:

"Have you a Spanish Bible?"

The Bible was shown to her, but she said quickly:

"This won't do. I want one with the Apocrypha in it."

All of which shows that the wearing of glass heels is no indication that you can't appreciate literature.



The Parasite

By Helen R. Martin

Author of "The Fighting Doctor," "Tillie: A Mennonite Maid," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY JEAN PALEOLOGUE

XXV.

JUDGE RANDALL found it rather difficult to be civilly attentive to the remarks of his dinner companion—who happened, by the way, to be the vague Mrs. Tyson—so interested he was in contemplating Joan in her first appearance, since her marriage, in Eastport society, the occasion being a small and select dinner party given in her honor by Mrs. Ridgely, and made up of Eastport's choicest social lights—and Eastport considered its choicest to be very choice indeed. Yet here was the once shy, inarticulate Joan leading the table talk, even under the very shadow of such highly reputed entertainers as their hostess, who was the daughter of an eminent United States senator; Catherine Tyson, known for her wit and repartee no less than for her personal charms; John Henry Nelker, the humorous writer, of whose world-wide celebrity Eastport was so justly proud; the scholarly President Moore, of the local college; Doctor Brooks, with a growing reputation throughout the State as a genuinely scientific physician and surgeon; and

several others of equal note and "choiceness." Randall's sense of humor was touched by the spectacle of the aforesaid disregarded Joan outshining even Catherine Tyson, at whose hands she had been wont to suffer patronage and slights.

He had no reason to-night to be dissatisfied with his wife's garb. He had been secretly astonished when, as he had waited for her to join him in the library, she had suddenly appeared before him in festive array—for, in spite of the simplicity she still affected in the new clothing she had been buying, her exquisite daintiness and the fine, pure lines of her face and form in the white, gauzy, diaphanous robe she wore had rather taken his breath.

"How blood will tell!" had been his quick, inward comment. "Only one born of a good race *could* look just like that!"

In the carriage, on the way to Mrs. Ridgely's, something which, ever since the night he had spoken to her about clothing herself better, he had vaguely noticed, now became a very definite impression—he was sure that Joan had

The first installment of "The Parasite" appeared in the November number of SMITH'S.



She had suddenly appeared before him in festive array.

looked, since that night, just a shade less bright and happy; a thin veil seemed to have fallen over the radiance of her face; and just now, seated opposite him in the carriage, she appeared to him pensive and troubled. Several times since that midnight talk, he had caught her looking at him in the strangest way—with wide, wondering gaze, almost with a hint of fear in the depths of her eyes. She had beautiful eyes—very beautiful.

Was it possible that she was fretting under a feeling that she was "a recipient of charity" in wearing the expensive clothing he had insisted upon? But what sort of a specimen of femininity was she if fine apparel made her sad? Was it not much more probable that

this unhappiness had something to do with Brooks?

It had been with deliberate intent that he had taken the seat opposite instead of beside her in the carriage. He had wanted to look at her. And there was another reason why it seemed inadvisable to sit beside her.

"It's to be hoped," he had remarked to her during the long drive—for Mrs. Ridgely lived in the suburbs—"you are not very fond of social gadding, Joan, for I'm not! These affairs seem to me such a waste! I'd so much prefer being at home in our cozy library—with Bappis asleep overhead. How do you feel about it?"

"My home life and a few friends are enough for me. Oh, it is such a relief to be at last situated where I can afford to drop things that bore me! To be able, without the least loss, to turn my back on society if I choose!"

"'Loss?' Loss of what?"

"Loss of that which women—most women and a few men—value above everything else in life—a recognized social position."

"You value it so highly?"

"I certainly do value the prestige which makes me independent of it."

"Independence of such superficialities should come from within—not from circumstances—don't you think?"

"Ralph Waldo Emerson," she smiled.

"But, Joan, you don't look like a shallow woman, you know!"

"That's something to be thankful for."

"You really think, do you," he inquired, "that the 'social position' you so perilously maintained as Miss Laird was worth the sacrifice you made for it?"

"I certainly do not!" she breathlessly answered, speaking so fervently that he was taken aback.

"Then why, in the name of God, child, did you regulate your life by such a vulgar ambition?"

"I—I had no choice," she said sadly, her eyes downcast.

"Oh, but come! No one is ever forced to be——" He hesitated.

"Vulgar, superficial, supine? But sometimes one is forced to choose between two evils——"

The carriage stopped under the portecochère of the Ridgelys' house, and Randall found himself surprised by his own sense of annoyance at the necessary suspension of their conversation, for he had been keen to hear what she had to say for herself on this point, which, the longer he knew her, seemed the more inexplicable.

And now, at Mrs. Ridgely's dinner table, under the stimulus of the champagne—or was it Doctor Brooks' presence at her side that afforded the stimulus?—Joan's pallor and melancholy of the last few days were gone, and she was entertaining the entire party with her droll account of Bappis' parting from her this evening.

"He does so hate to have me go away that the very sight of an evening gown is offensive to him. This evening he got out of bed to watch me dress, and when I submitted myself for his approval he dumfounded me by regarding me most disdainfully, and remarking with the most scathing scorn: 'Poor child of vanity!'"

Her imitation of Bappis' tone and manner was delightful to those who knew the boy.

"You ought to feel very conceited indeed," Catherine Tyson, on Randall's right, remarked to him, "at the way you have brought out the unsuspected social gift of your wife!"

"I certainly would be if I could flatter myself that I had done it."

"Is it Brooks, then, who has wrought the transformation? If so, I must say that——"

"Must say what?"

"You take it complacently!"

"That little way you have, Catherine, of stepping in where angels would fear to tread!"

"Oh, if it's sacred ground—or a sore point—I beg your pardon!"

"The man on your right is looking wilted at your neglect of him. Let *him* have some of your shafts. He's in that state where he'd let you use him for a football or a doormat."

"And you aren't? Oh, he'll keep. And I don't often have a chance to worry you with my 'shafts.' By the way, do you remember the Miss Dorsey who nursed you when you had typhoid?"

"Vaguely."

"She is nursing Mary Lowndes. I was calling on Mary to-day, and she told me she had the nurse you had had."

"Miss Lowndes told you?"

"Yes; Miss Dorsey had told her."

"An excellent nurse," Randall remarked, "as I remember her."

It had not escaped him that, at the mention of Miss Dorsey's name, Joan had, with a slight start, looked across at Catherine, and that her face had gone pale. What did *that* portend?

"Yes," said Catherine. "Mary Lowndes seems perfectly devoted to this Miss Dorsey. She's a remarkably good-looking girl. You remember, no doubt?"

"I never met Miss Lowndes that I know of."

"But I mean Miss Dorsey."

"Oh, Miss Dorsey? As I said—vaguely."

Their attention was caught by the sound of Joan's voice, speaking almost excitedly, as in reply to Mr. John Henry Nelker's chaffing her on a bride's housekeeping, she at once began to relate, with much animation, her absurd experience with a new housemaid whom she was training. Though Joan's voice was always low and soft, it seemed to have an oddly arresting quality, for when she spoke, every one was apt to pause and listen, even though what she said was as trivial as this story of the housemaid who, having been instructed to bring the card plate upstairs to her mistress when she admitted visitors, had thoughtfully removed the cards from the plate, obedi-

ently carried the empty plate upstairs, and confidently presented it to her lady.

"And having been told," continued Joan, "that this proceeding was futile, she made sure she would perform her feat right the next time, so she brought the second visitor upstairs bodily."

"On the card plate?" facetiously inquired the professional humorist.

"I suppose," Catherine again addressed Randall, "you'll be coming out of your long seclusion now, and going into society, won't you? You'll *have* to—whether you want to or not."

"Have to? Oh, Mrs. Randall won't henpeck me to that extent! Besides, I haven't time for it, you know. No man has who is not a loafer."

"A bride can't very well be going about everywhere without her husband, can she?"

"But I don't believe Joan cares for 'going about' any more than I do."

"Well," smiled Catherine, "she's sufficiently accompanied to-night, anyway, isn't she—with you and Doctor Brooks both here to look after her?"

Before he could reply, they were again caught up in the general attention turned to Joan, who was discussing with the college president at her left the recent novel of Mrs. Ward's which raised anew the problem of the renowned *Robert Elsmere*.

"Isn't it very significant," Joan was saying, "that the same 'problem' which twenty years ago brought forth such world-wide discussion, now doesn't cause so much as a ripple on the placid indifference toward religious questions? What is the significance of the fact that a theme once so pregnant, now can't be *galvanized* into life? Surely the problem hasn't been settled—for there are still believers and unbelievers; there are still a clergy and churches as well as skeptics. Why is it," she went on, though her cheeks faintly flushed as she found herself addressing a silent table, "that in these days a novel or a play having a clergyman for a leading character won't go down with the public? A publisher told me that clergymen can be utilized acceptably in fiction nowadays only at deathbed scenes and

as wicked hypocrites. Yet nearly all of us do still 'love a church, a cowl, a prophet of the soul.' I've wondered about it."

President Moore, who was philosophical, was quite sure he understood the phenomenon, and while he prosily talked, conversation again became general.

After dinner, as the men smoked in the library, Randall observed how restless Doctor Brooks was; how impatient evidently to join the women in the drawing-room; how bored by the discussion of public affairs in which the other men were so interested.

"Without vast aggregations of capital," a "bloated bondholder" was rather aggressively attacking him, the judge, in reference to his recent famous sentence upon a corrupt corporation, "where would be the comforts which the modern man makes use of? Swift and safe travel by land and sea; all the conveniences and timesaving of electricity; literature and art within reach of all; none of these things which mean so much to us would be possible without vast accumulations of capital in a few hands. Combination and concentration are the modern industrial law."

"Who disputes it? Of course they are," agreed Randall. "No one who rightly reads the times dreams of going back to old-time petty competition. We all realize that vast accumulation of capital is absolutely indispensable to modern conditions. Those 'few hands,' however, that manipulate it will not long continue to do so, Mr. Nestor, for their self-interest alone, nor will they be *self-appointed*, but—if our democracy is to live—they will be appointed by the people to manipulate the vast capital of the country for the benefit of the people."

"That's nothing but damned, rank socialism, you know, Randall!"

"Well, Nestor, the trust magnates who have built up big industries—while working solely for their self-interest—have, of course, unwittingly benefited society in the vast saving of time and energy that was once uselessly dissipated in the competition of many

small industries—and these industrial giants have simply got ready their great industries to be taken over by the government for the benefit of the people. To dissolve these combines is, I do believe, to act with the most stupid blindness. They are an inevitable evolution in the progress of civilization toward a more ideal, a more human, a less brutal, social condition."

No one agreed with him, and, as the discussion waxed hot, Randall simply withdrew from it, recognizing the futility of arguing with men whose minds and souls were enslaved to their self-interest.

"He only is a free man," he reflected, "who can see a truth which militates against himself."

When presently they went over to the drawing-room, he saw how promptly Brooks made a bee line for Joan.

"I'd like to know," he wondered, "what he expects to get out of it!"

He watched them speculatively as he kept up a perfunctory talk with Mrs. Tyson. Joan had willingly let herself be led away to a far window seat, where very soon she and her companion seemed lost to everything but each other. Was it possible that their intimacy had advanced to a point where Joan had confided to Brooks the nature of her marriage? If so, of course Brooks might well feel justified in his unreserved attentions to her. But what was *her* idea in thus giving herself over to a friendship with a man?

"Run away, mother, and talk to Mrs. Ridgely," Catherine ordered her obedient parent, as, deliberately deserting her dinner companion, who, Randall had noticed, had been as eager to join her as Brooks had been to get to Joan, she came across the room to the couch where the young judge sat with her mother.

Randall rose as Mrs. Tyson gave her seat to her daughter, then seated himself again beside Catherine.

"You seem very absent-minded to-night, Arthur."

"On the contrary, I am very much interested."

"In me?"

"What mere male could help being interested in you in that frock? It's simply wrecked the peace of yonder man at the mantel whom you've just abandoned to his despair. See how the miserable wretch is watching you!"

Meantime, Joan, at the farther end of the room, not too engrossed in her companion to be aware of the pair on the couch, wondered, as she looked at them, how Judge Randall *could* smile into the eyes of another woman while, in a distant city, his wife—she did not ever think of *herself* as his wife—broke her heart because of the cruel wrong he did her. What in the world, she wondered, *would* he have to say for himself in defense or explanation of his conduct to that suffering woman?

"Shall I ever have courage," she asked herself many times that night, with a troubled heart beneath her outward gayety, "to speak to him about it?"

For until she did do so, she felt she should know no peace, no self-respect.

"I can't put it off! The sooner I plunge in and have it over, the better!"

But the conviction haunted her like a superstition that with the opening up of that subject between them, her present relations with Judge Randall would have to end.

XXVI.

Again on their homeward drive, Randall avoided sitting beside Joan. He fully realized that he dared not trust himself. Since she had presented herself before him in the library that night in evening array, he had become aware that, though he was not in love with her, the appeal, for him, of her person, her mere physical allurements, was suddenly overpowering; had, indeed, awakened the savage in him; and that he must hold the fierce creature with a grip of iron.

Just now, as from the opposite side of the big carriage he viewed her in all her young loveliness, wrapped in her long white evening cloak, he reiterated to himself that he certainly did not love her—the bare idea was surely prepos-

terous. But—she was a woman and fair; and he was a man and she was his, if he would!

But *was* she his if he would? No doubt, in spite of their compact, she would only be flattered at his desire to break it—far more pleased—if she were a human woman—than if he adhered to it.

Yet, strangely enough, with the awakening of his senses to her feminine charm, there was born in him a reverence for her pure girlhood, a chivalrous instinct to protect it, that would have made him suffer with the damned before he would have alarmed or shocked her.

And then, too, the look in her eyes as they rested upon him just now was a warning. It was that same look almost

of fear, of shrinking, with which, ever since the night of his talk with her about her shabby clothing, she had seemed to regard him. Did she feel to-night—beneath the cold, stern exterior with which he held himself in check—the fire of his blood? And did it frighten, repel her?

They drove home in almost absolute silence—inasmuch as he did not invite conversation, and Joan never talked with him voluntarily.

But when, at their own door, he had given her his hand as she stepped out of the carriage, and had, in the hall, taken her long wrap from her shoulders and thrown it over his arm, he rather peremptorily stopped her precipitate flight upstairs.

"Will you come into the library for a few minutes?" he curtly invited her.

"Certainly."

"It is not necessary, you know," he remarked, in a tone of irritation, as he stepped back to let her pass into the room, "to avoid me!"

He thought she looked hurt at his tone, and he hastened to make amends.

"Because," he smiled down upon her as he wheeled a chair for her to the lighted fire, "I'm really not dangerous."

A feeble, perfunctory smile answered him as they both sat down.

"To-morrow," he proceeded at once to his purpose in detaining her, "I've got to go to New York again for a ten days' absence."

"Have you?" she said, with polite, impersonal interest.

"You keep it so—to use that word of yours 'damned' comfortable for a man here at home,



"And what," he inquired, "is your idea of *tasting* life?"

Joan, that it's grown to be a nightmare to me to have to go away and sojourn in hotels."

"It would seem inexpedient, then," she faintly smiled again as she stretched a small, white-slipped foot to the fender, "to keep you so comfortable."

"Makes it harder to get rid of me?"

Did he only imagine that she blushed guiltily at the suggestion?

"I mean because of the 'nightmare,'" she answered.

"You know," he said, leaning his head against the high back of his chair, and stretching out his legs toward the fire, "you are giving me the first taste of home I've had in ten years."

"Ten years? Not so long as that?" she repeated questioningly. "I thought it was only a little over four years since you—"

She stopped short and looked at him with puzzled eyes.

"Since," he said quietly, "I lived here in this house with Bappis' mother? Yes."

She continued to gaze at him for a moment. Then an irresistible curiosity, it seemed, impelled her to her first digression from the rôle of a house-keeper who knows her place, and she asked him a question—a very personal question:

"And it was not home to you when—when Bappis' mother was—was here?"

He shook his head. "No."

"Never?"

"Never."

"But—but why?"

"Home-making requires a divine endowment, a special genius, Joan."

"In a way, perhaps," she conceded. "But a tent would be home to me with one I loved."

"To you—because you'd have the genius to make it a homelike tent."

He waited curiously to hear whether she would venture to press him further. But she dropped it.

"Will you allow me," she suddenly asked him, with a little embarrassed movement of her head, "to have mother with me while you are away?"

"Don't say 'allow.' Fancy my per-

mitting you to have your own mother here! I think," he added, his tone becoming grave, "it highly advisable that you should have your mother here in my absence, inasmuch as I am sure you very much need a chaperon."

The embarrassed color deepened in her cheeks, but she answered him steadily: "Thank you. I shall send for her then—not, however, because I feel the need of a chaperon. Bappis is chaperon enough."

"Send for her by all means—for whatever reason!"

"There's another thing," she said hesitatingly. "If—if my mother comes—she has not seen me since my—since we—married each other"—she floundered hopelessly—what a childish little thing she was anyway, in spite of her occasional display of precocious intelligence!

"Since we married each other?" he repeated. "Yes?"

"And I would keep it from her that my marriage is—what it is—but people notice that I wear no ring, and she will notice, and—I should like to have a ring, if you don't mind, Judge Randall," she brought it out at last.

"Most certainly you must have a ring if you want one. Get yourself one tomorrow. I'll leave a check with you."

But the absurdity of her buying her own wedding ring suddenly struck him, and he laughed. "If you prefer," he said, "I'll stop at a shop on my way to the station and send one up."

"Don't tax yourself like that—all that is necessary is that mother shall not—"

"Find us out. It would make her unhappy, would it? But you are not unhappy?"

He watched her between half-closed eyelids as he asked the question.

"That's the trouble," she said, in a low voice, without looking at him. "I'm too comfortable and contented here—and with the added consciousness of mother's welfare! It makes me—well, I feel as if I just couldn't give it all up!"

"Who asks you to give it all up?"

"Oh, Judge Randall, sometimes I

feel it is very wrong to be keeping Bappis from his mother!"

"That's my affair, Joan!" he sharply answered. Good God! Was it this that was making her look unhappy? Was this the loophole by which she thought to get away from him and go to Brooks?

"If you had scruples, Joan," he said, almost sternly, "why didn't you trot them out before we 'married each other'?"

"I didn't know—I didn't think. All I cared for was that I was going to have Bappis and a home of my own, and the means to provide for my worn-out mother."

"And that's all you need care for still. The other matter you have nothing whatever to do with. I can still trust you, Joan?" he demanded.

"Yes," she breathed, her eyes downcast.

He rose, looking grim and frowning, and with his hands thrust in his pockets, slowly paced the breadth of the room in front of her.

"There is something I feel obliged to admonish you about before I go away," he said gravely.

"Yes?"

"You have, of course, being a woman, some little human fondness for admiration—especially the admiration of men—eh?"

"A woman that did not have would be weird!"

"Weird"—exactly. Very weird! But I feel obliged to warn you, Joan—very seriously warn you—that you must not let this exceedingly feminine weakness lead you into indiscretion. Observe the proprieties, at least."

"The 'proprieties'? But I thought you, of all men, eschewed the 'proprieties'!"

"Theoretically, I may, perhaps. But when it comes to the women of one's own household— Well, hardly!"

"But have I done anything improper?" she anxiously inquired.

"Don't you think that you allowed Doctor Brooks to monopolize you too much this evening? Wasn't it, to say the least, not quite in good taste, see-

ing you were the guest of honor, to go off alone into a corner and stick there all evening?"

"With you and Miss Tyson 'sticking' in the opposite corner all evening! Oh, I'm afraid we distinguished ourselves—as a family—for 'bad taste,' didn't we?"

Randall grinned, and, strolling over to the fire, stood before her, his hands still thrust deep into his pockets.

"Shall it be a compact, then, Joan?—I'll not monopolize Miss Tyson or any one else in public, if *you* won't."

"But I thought our very definite understanding was that you—or was it we?—were to be absolutely free."

"Of each other, yes. But we are neither of us free to cause a scandal. Brooks comes here too much. It would be especially injudicious to let him come frequently while I am out of town. You will heed my request in this matter?"

"Naturally—if you will tell me exactly how often he may come?"

"May come!" I lay down no commands! Your common sense and your sense of honor must guide you."

She looked troubled, but made no answer.

"And the other matter—I have your word that you will remain faithful to the trust, the responsibility I put upon you—to guard my son for me?"

"You have my word."

She spoke so low, he had to bend his head slightly to catch her reply.

A sound overhead arrested them. It was Bappis, who, having waked, was calling for her. Her name was always at his lips the moment his eyes were opened.

She rose and hastened to go to him; and Randall, presently picking up her evening cloak from the back of a chair, slowly followed.

XXVII.

Randall's ten days in New York were too absorbingly occupied to admit of his giving any but the most casual consideration to things at home, though not in his busiest hours did he wholly es-

cape the spell under which Joan's feminine daintiness had brought him on that night of the Ridgelys' dinner—a spell so potent, so insistent and compelling, that he wondered how, living under the same roof with her, he was going to cope with it. For cope with and conquer it he must. There was a quality about Joan—a delicacy, a remoteness—that would have made it a desecration to "love" her in the common sense when one was not in love with the soul of her.

Three times during his absence she wrote to him of Bappis' well-being; but she wrote of nothing else. She did not mention either her mother or Brooks; he did not even know whether Mrs. Laird had gone to her.

Among the mail she forwarded to him there were no letters from poor Laura. Was the poor, poor girl giving it up at last? Never, surely, had two people waged a combat more agonizing on both sides than that which for four years he and his son's mother had kept up with scarcely any intermission. If it had been as harrowing upon her as upon him, Heaven help her!

It was not until he was on his way home that he found time to wonder what possible new shocks and surprises would this time meet him. But his speculations fell far short of the reality that was preparing for him, though it did not greet him until he had been home two days, and had quite settled down to the consoling surprise of find-

ing no surprises—Bappis being well and happy, Brooks *not* in the drawing-room, Joan looking just as he had left her—an elasticity, a self-confidence in her aspect and manner that her unmarried days had never known—but over which there still hung that impalpable veil of pensiveness which he could not escape associating with her friendship with Brooks.

His very first sight of her as she gave him her hand in the hall—looking maddeningly pretty in a low-necked black velvet dinner gown—stung him to such a desire to fold her in his arms that to save himself he kept his eyes away from her, and his greeting was so cold and formal he feared she would be hurt.

He found, in the next few days, that his only salvation was in keeping out of her presence and burying himself in work; to see her only when he must, at hastily snatched meals. So little, indeed, did they see and speak together that he did not even yet know whether or not her mother had visited her in his absence.

And then came his surprise—his knock-down amazement.

It was just after dinner one evening, when, too tired out to wrestle with himself, he yielded to the warmth, brightness, and general coziness of the house and its mistress, and lingered to have coffee with her in the library—though he knew he was jeopardizing the very comfort that beguiled him.



"I do not believe," he said, "that you will have Bappis here."

The big logs blazed and crackled in the fireplace before which they sat with their cups. Joan, in one of those babyish white gowns she had worn last summer, looked very childish, save for that mature thoughtfulness of her eyes which Randall had come to recognize, but which, last summer, he had never realized, so at variance it had seemed with the positively infantine curve of her mouth and with her invariably negative bearing.

"We shall have to have the Tysons here to dinner, Joan, some time—with Hubert and Ned McCord."

"Whenever you say."

"That is, unless you feel that it's asking too much of you to expect you to receive Catherine—she's none too civil to you! I should hardly venture to suggest your asking them if I had not heard you last summer, just after some slight from Catherine to you, accept Mrs. Tyson's invitation to visit her."

He said it deliberately—urged by the curiosity that had long possessed him to understand why a girl of such fineness in some respects could ever have been such a parasite.

She colored so sensitively at his words that he felt himself a brute.

"If you only knew," she said breathlessly, "how I hate to remember those things!"

"Then pardon me!" he said hastily. "And if you have the least objection to asking Miss Tyson here, of course she must not be asked."

"If," said Joan, smiling, "her treatment of me is not bad enough to make you feel you can't ask her, surely I need not resent it."

"Inasmuch as I swore at the altar to honor and protect you? Well, I surely won't ask you to invite her if you feel she abuses you!"

"But don't mind me! To be sure, Miss Tyson is not a very agreeable person—nor very interesting; one can more easily forgive unamiability in an *interesting* person; but the Tysons are old friends of your family, and Mrs. Tyson is very sweet."

"And interesting?"

"Well, she is at least amusing. It's only people that bore me that I find it hard to forgive. Mrs. Tyson has a heart. I like her."

"And Catherine bores you?"

"Oh, infinitely!"

"Why?"

"Her cocksureness that she and her class are the only elect; that the little, cramped ideas of life held by that class are the end of truth; her complacency, her patronizing airs, her cheap ideals!"

"How you hate her!"

"No," Joan answered quietly. "She seems to me too insignificant to be hated—though I suppose she'd be rather surprised to know that I think her insignificant; no doubt you are surprised, too, and probably amused. But it is my real and honest feeling about her—not pique, as you probably think it."

He rose to take her empty cup, and, as he sat down again, she leaned forward in her chair, her elbow on the arm of it, her chin on her hand, and looked at him with an intent, starry gaze that made his heart beat thick in his breast.

"I am glad," she began, in a voice that slightly quivered, "that you are stopping at home a while this evening—as I have to ask you something."

At once he felt in her tone a note that made him dread to hear what was coming.

"Something," she went on, "which I could never ask you if I did not know your liberal views of such things."

"Such things? My 'views'? What things?"

"You think it right and justifiable, even one's duty, I believe, to yield to one's nature; to *live*—to the uttermost of one's power; to escape the shackles of conventions."

"Until one does do this, he does not live at all," Randall admitted.

"You said once: 'Stop only at what is ugly, marring.'"

"Did I?"

"I'd like to taste of life. I never *have*—so far."

"And what," he inquired, "is your idea of tasting of life?"

"I want experiences. The freedom

this marriage has given me has brought out so much in me that I didn't know was there—that I never thought of—so that I have come to feel I can't be reconciled to going through life without some things—which this hasty marriage with you would cheat me of! I can't be reconciled to that!"

Randall sat motionless, looking at her, the thumping of his heart almost suffocating him.

"Doctor Brooks," she stated quite simply, "loves me. The only man that ever has. As my marriage is only a form, an appearance, any vital relation I might have with another need not interfere with my fulfilling my whole obligation to you. So, since I can't marry Doctor Brooks, if you would consent to be, before the world—to be my husband—the world would not know." She stammered, hesitated, flushed, and became silent.

"Do you expect me to take this seriously? Or shall I send for an alienist?"

"I am both serious, and, as far as I know, sane."

"I thought we had faced the sacrifice you would make—didn't we?—on the night I asked you to marry me?"

"I did not realize—because at that time no man had ever loved me."

"The question is, do you love Brooks?"

"How can I help it when he is good enough to be so devoted to me?"

"How, indeed!" he acquiesced, a tinge of mockery in his tone, his eyes burning bright as they rested upon her.

"But," she reasoned, "I would be a very cold-blooded, ungrateful person *not* to—to care for him in return."

"To care for him in return isn't loving him. I don't believe you know what love is."

"If any one can teach me, he can."

"No doubt! Has he ever—kissed you? He has got that far?"

"Oh, yes," she said reassuringly; "he has kissed me."

"It's a habit with him, is it?"

"Three times in all."

"*Becoming* a habit!"

"He is the only man who ever kissed me."

"Believe me, it's only the novelty, then, Joan, that makes it so pleasing."

"But I didn't say it was 'so pleasing'!"

"Isn't it?"

"Oh, yes, indeed!"

"Of course you *told* him he was the only man who had ever kissed you?"

"Oh, yes; he knows that."

"And what does he think of the fact that your lawful husband has *never*—kissed you?"

"I'd better not tell you—he thinks it in such forcible language!"

"This wild thing you hint at—it certainly isn't Brooks' idea?"

"Not his at all. He *derided* it, and refused to consider it when I offered it as a substitute for *his* plan."

"And what, please, is his plan?"

"That I ask you to let me go—to divorce me so that he may marry me. He thinks that since this marriage of ours is not a real marriage, your sacrifice in doing this would not be anything like so great as mine in denying myself all that life has to offer a woman—of love, of motherhood."

"I see. So his idea is that you shall leave me?"

"Yes—the only idea he will entertain at all."

"But why, then, bring me this 'substitute for his plan,' and ask me to consent to it if *he* won't consider it?"

"I thought perhaps if he found you perfectly willing, his objections would be overcome. Because, you see, he *can't* have me as he wants me—I will not leave you so long as you wish me to stay with you—so kind as you have been to me and my mother! And," she added, that diaphanous cloud falling over her earnest countenance, "I could not desert Bappis."

"If Bappis is so much to you, why doesn't he fill your yearning for love—and other things?"

"I don't see *how* I could love a child of my own more! But"—her eyes fell as she went on—"I suppose, in spite of all my artificial rearing, I am, after all, a very primitive creature. I want to



Joan failed to catch her name in the clamor of the children's voices and the chugging of the car.

really live. I want it so much that I am asking you to consent to—this.”

“It seems to be some vague yearning, rather than love for the man, Joan, that moves you to make this extraordinary request of me!”

“I can’t see why,” she said, shaking her head, “you and Doctor Brooks should both think it so extraordinary. He wouldn’t even discuss it.”

“Which is to his credit certainly! You actually see no objections yourself to this wild idea of yours you have only hinted? It’s too wild for either of us to put into words.”

“Not so long as I give you what you want. I would not let anything interfere with that. I would not,” she said, “have entered into any clandestine rela-

tion—even if Doctor Brooks had wished it—which of course he did not.”

“But you come honorably to your legal husband, and ask his consent to your accepting another man as your lover—and will he kindly please agree to pretend ‘before the world’ to remain your husband? Was there ever such another funny, naïve child as you, Joan! Not the old-time ingénue of the stage, you! An up-to-date one! Joan, I’m glad I married you if for nothing else than not to have missed this! It’s so astounding!”

“But when,” she argued, smiling, having recovered her composure, “my ‘legal husband’ never was and never wants to be my lover?”

“You’d think it a dog-in-the-manger business, would you, if he refused to give you to another? But the thing you want, Joan, would be so—well, to put it very mildly, disorderly.”

“Disorderly?” She considered it. “But Nature herself is disorderly.”

“Not when rightly understood. Brooks knows, does he, that you meant to come to me with this?”

“Yes, but he advised me not to—he was sure you would refuse it.”

“And what do you expect me to do?”

“I can’t see the least reason why you should object.”

“My refusal would mean unhappiness for you?”

“It would mean,” she said slowly, “that I should greatly regret I had met Doctor Brooks too late.”

Randall rose abruptly. He was very pale. Standing with his back to the fire, his big, broad figure towered over her.

"Joan," he said, "you must give it up. The thing is not to be thought of. For your own sake—for your youth, your honor, your happiness, your purity—your mother—you must give it up. You are too young, too ignorant of life, to know into what a pit you are proposing to cast yourself! I can't let you ignorantly destroy yourself. Brooks, too, if he loves you, will refuse to let you do this thing!"

"But Ruskin gave up his wife to Mil-lais."

"To give you up absolutely—that's another thing. If your happiness demands it, I shall have to do it. But to give you up to a course of secrecy, deception, and disorder—no, Joan!"

"A divorce between us would ruin your career. I will not bring that upon you after all you have done for my mother and me. And—I don't want to go away from Bappis."

"Yourself aside, Joan, think of the unfairness of the conditions you propose! The unfairness to Brooks!"

She looked startled. "I'm afraid," she faltered, "I had not thought that far!"

"Promise me that you will hold this whole matter in abeyance for six months. Will you?"

"I must if you bid me."

"I do bid you."

"Very well, Judge Randall."

"And meantime, I'll see Brooks."

She said nothing.

"You don't mind my talking to Brooks?"

"Why should I? He is so very capable of handling his own case—of taking care of himself!"

"Have you any idea what an immense astonishment you are to me, Joan?"

"Not more than I am to myself," she said, with a little sigh.

She rose suddenly, and, before he could stop her, she excused herself and left the room.

But he had no desire to stop her.

Sinking again into his chair before the fire, he pressed his hands to his hot eyes.

What, *what* had held him back from doing that which he so passionately desired to do—taking her in his arms and telling her that her yearning for motherhood could be satisfied, if she would, without the dangers to which she proposed to subject herself. *Why* had he not done this?

He realized why it was. The very frankness of her surprising proposition so revealed the virgin purity of the girl! And surely the man that loved her, as he verily believed Brooks did, was the one who alone had the right to touch such innocence; to make her a mother.

"Inasmuch as it is love—spiritual love, not physical—that makes the union of a man and woman sacramental!" he affirmed to himself.

But his own feeling for her? He could not escape the bewildering realization that in the past hour it had undergone an amazing change. Hitherto, desire, held in check by a subtle sense of reverence for the maiden, had been the nature of his passion for her. But now a burning jealousy of the other man, a fierce protest against any least aggression upon what had suddenly come to appear to him as his most precious possession, shook him to the foundation of his being.

"By God, I *couldn't* give Joan up!"

His own exclamation brought suddenly to his recollection Catherine's assertion. "Her rôle now is to get at you through the doctor!" And his heart bounded with a sudden mad hope that that *was* her rôle. But the hope died with its birth; for though men were supposed by women to be blind bats when being "worked" by the subtler sex, he knew, if he knew anything, that Joan was not given to playing rôles. If she were, he should only pity and despise her, and not be asking himself palpitatingly whether he loved her. Anyway, people who played rôles, however cleverly, did not usually go so straight to their mark as this—for certainly if Joan's mark had been to win him by exciting his

jealousy of Brooks, she had accomplished it! He felt he could kill Brooks in cold blood before he could let him take Joan from him.

"Am I, then," he asked himself, "actually in love with the child?"

If he was not, why this murderous instinct toward Brooks? This fierce desire to confront him with the melodramatic threat: "*One* of us has got to die!"

And if he was in love with her, was he too late? Had she really given her virgin love to his forerunner in the field?

That night, as with fevered blood he lay awake, tormented with alternating passions of misery and of ecstasy, he again recalled some words Catherine had once spoken to him: "Let the right person take you in hand, and you will find yourself as much alive as ever you were."

Well, she had spoken truth; for though the "right person" had not turned out to be the lady who thus prophesied, nor yet the one who had consciously "taken him in hand," nevertheless, he *had* been taken in hand—with the result that he was certainly now alive—tremendously, dangerously alive!

XXVIII.

Before Randall had had a chance to seek that proposed interview with Brooks, an event happened that made it not only unnecessary, but impossible.

Mrs. Tyson and her daughter, together with Mr. Hubert McCord and his son Ned, had dined formally with the Randalls; and the sense of frustration with which Catherine had come away from that dinner—not only in her continued failure to delicately slight Mrs. Randall and make her jealous—a thing she had once supposed very easy to do—but in her equal failure to gain the closer relation with Randall for which she so passionately longed—had set her to thinking very hard that night, in the seclusion of her room.

It had come to the point where the one thing she wanted of life was that

which life was denying her—the love of the only man she had ever known who had been too strong for her. And that his resistance *was* strength, and not indifference, did she not have proof? Had he not sought her, delighted in her—kissed her—last summer, even while betrothed to this woman now his wife? It was only that boy of his who had stood between her and the great, unspeakable happiness of winning him. It was even now only the boy. He did not love Joan. It was *she*, Catherine, whom he loved, if he loved any woman. And he was of the type of man, she recognized, who could not live without loving a woman. If, for the past four years he had lived without it, he was surely now at the end of his endurance, and ready for a passion that would be all the mightier for this long self-repression. The boy, then, disposed of, sent where he rightly belonged—to his own mother—Joan would be out of the running, and Randall would certainly turn to her, Catherine, his true mate! Was it not well worth the trying for—the risk? And where could there possibly be any wrong in what she would do? Would she not rather be righting a great injustice?

Her decision to act was not reached suddenly or impulsively. Long had it been fermenting and seething in her soul—until now, maddened by her unsatisfied hunger for the man, she was blind and deaf to every consideration that stood in the way of her gaining him.

So long and so deeply had she thought of what she was now about to do, that her course lay clear before her. The first thing necessary was to send for Doctor Brooks.

He, thinking of course that he was summoned professionally, arrived at the LaFayette a few hours after he was sent for, at four o'clock in the afternoon.

When his name was brought up to their rooms, Mrs. Tyson was at once dispatched by her daughter to go calling, shopping, anything—and not to reappear at their suite so long as the

doctor's motor stood at the door of the hotel.

Much bewildered and somewhat troubled, the flustered lady obeyed, being much too fearful of Catherine's displeasure not to.

Doctor Brooks was received by Miss Tyson in the elegant little sitting room of the choice suite they occupied at the LaFayette. She had fitted the room up very tastefully with rugs, curtains, and pictures of her own, and it had a most inviting air.

She knew that Brooks disliked her. But that, of course, merely because he realized her contempt for the poor-spirited creature with whom he had the bad taste to be infatuated. Should she, Catherine Tyson, take the trouble to exert herself to attract him, Joan, of course, could never hold her own against such a rival.

But Catherine had no wish to win him from Mrs. Randall. His manifest devotion to Joan served her purposes far too well.

"Ah, it is your mother, then, that is ill?" he asked, as he shook hands with her, admitting to himself reluctantly that she was undoubtedly a very splendid-looking woman in this wonderful gown of old-rose crape which she wore.

"No one is ill," she said, in her lazy drawl, as she smiled and sat down. "I sent for you to talk with you."

He looked at her in quick surprise, but sat down before her, holding his hat.

"If I had known that, I might have come later, when I would have had more time than now," he said.

"I shall not detain you long. To come right to my point—you are, I believe, Doctor Brooks, acquainted with Mrs. Randall?"

"Acquainted with Mrs. Randall?" Oh, you mean with *Laura* Randall?"

"Of course."

"I know her, yes."

"Mrs. McCord intimated to me at one time that you and your father were violently in sympathy with her."

"A subject I can't, of course, discuss, you know—professional honor, and so forth."

8

"Certainly. But if you sympathize with her, you must think that she should have her son."

Brooks, not replying, waited for her to go on.

"And that her son would be better off with his own mother."

Brooks remained silent, looking at her steadily.

"I don't know whether you are aware that Judge Randall married his present wife only to have a caretaker for his boy."

"Indeed?" he said coldly.

"Only for that. If Bappis should be restored to his mother, Doctor Brooks, the reason for Mrs. Randall's presence in her husband's house would cease to exist. She could—go to the man who loves her."

She brought it out straight, looking at him challengingly.

But he met it unflinchingly, though his face and neck flamed red.

"Doctor Brooks, if you will bring Mrs. Laura Randall to Eastport next Friday, I shall undertake to get Bappis and give him to her."

"You could not; he is too closely guarded. The present Mrs. Randall is too utterly faithful to the trust her husband reposes in her."

"But if you will only promise to have Mrs. Randall here, I assure you I *shall* manage the rest of it."

"Inasmuch as you are not yearning to befriend Laura Randall, whom I think you never met, who is it you are wanting to *injure*, Miss Tyson?"

"No one. I want Joan Randall out of the way. I want to make it possible for her to leave a husband who does not love her, and go to one who does. Does that sound like injuring her?"

"Why do you want her out of the way?"

"Can't you guess? Haven't you seen?"

"Seen that Randall is your lover?"

"It is I," she said, in a low, passionate voice, "not Joan—that he loves!"

"You really mean that?"

"I have reason to mean it!"

He looked at her long and earnestly.

"You and I," she went on, "Judge

Randall, Laura, Bappis, and Joan—would each and all of us have what we want most in life, if you would bring Mrs. Randall next Friday to Eastport—to this hotel.”

“Judge Randall wants you more than he wants Bappis? Then why didn’t he turn Bappis over to his mother last summer, and marry you instead of a—‘caretaker’ for his boy?”

“Do you believe for one moment that in his obstinate refusal to give up Bappis he is actuated only by love for the boy, and not in any least measure by resentment against Laura Randall?”

“Then you think his ‘resentment’ was a stronger emotion than his love for you? But I tell you, *he* had no cause for resentment!” came from Brooks impetuously, his eyes flashing the indignation he always found it difficult to suppress professionally when this subject was under discussion.

“Didn’t he?” Catherine asked cautiously. She would have given the world to know the story of Randall’s divorce.

But Brooks was instantly on his guard again.

“I am sure,” he said, “that whatever Judge Randall’s idiosyncrasies, he is too essentially a gentleman to take pleasure in *punishing*, by the slow torture of a defrauded motherhood, the woman who was once his beloved wife, and who is his only son’s mother!”

“Do you *justify* his keeping Bappis from her?”

“It is not my affair.”

“Do you see any reason why you and I should not serve our own passionate needs through righting a wrong—giving back to a ‘defrauded’ mother her little son?”

He did not at once speak. She waited as ponderingly, frowningly, he looked on the floor. The clock ticked loudly in the silent room—while little Bappis’ fate hung in the balance.

At last he spoke:

“Miss Tyson, I will bring Mrs. Randall here, to your hotel, next Friday.”

“I shall have Bappis here, and will give him to his mother.”

“I do not believe,” he said, looking

white as he rose, “that you will have Bappis here. But I shall have Mrs. Randall here.”

She, too, rose, her face flushed, her eyes brilliant, with the triumph of her success.

He feigned not to see the hand she extended in farewell, as abruptly he bade her good afternoon and took his leave.

XXIX.

It was two days later that Joan was called to the telephone to speak with Mrs. Tyson, Catherine taking the precaution to use her mother in order to avert suspicion of anything sinister or inimical.

“We want to take Bappis to the Trained Animal Show on Friday afternoon—Catherine and I,” Mrs. Tyson explained, “if you will be so good as to let us, Mrs. Randall.”

“That is very kind of you, Mrs. Tyson,” came Joan’s answer; “but I had planned to take him myself—I bought the tickets to-day. Thank you all the same—and I know Mr. Randall will appreciate your kindness.”

“Oh! Well—just hold the phone a minute, please!”

Joan heard the subdued murmuring of two voices for a minute at the other end of the line. Then again Mrs. Tyson spoke:

“But we are inviting a little party of children, Mrs. Randall—Willie Sheldon, and Jessie Allen, and a few others. Can’t you let Bappis be one of the party?”

“It is most kind of you—but, my dear Mrs. Tyson, you *know* Bappis—how he doesn’t, unfortunately, mix very well with other children—your party will go much more smoothly without him. I really think you’d better count him out.”

“We’ve already bought the tickets,” Mrs. Tyson said tentatively.

“But you can so easily get another child in Bappis’ place.”

“To tell you the truth, we were really getting up the little party for Bappis. And we should be so glad, dear Mrs.

Randall, if you *could* arrange—you see, dear Catherine has——”

She stopped short, and again an instant's murmured consultation came to Joan's waiting ear.

“Dear Catherine,” she continued, “has given up an afternoon of bridge for this great event, and *will* be so disappointed if Bappis can't come.”

“I'm most sorry to disappoint you—but you probably know Mr. Randall's strict orders—Bappis goes nowhere without his nurse or me.”

“But surely you can trust him with *us*, Mrs. Randall—such old friends of the family, and——”

“Yes, yes, indeed; I'm only speaking of his father's orders.”

“Well, then, *you* come with us, dear Mrs. Randall, and bring——”

“Mamma!” Joan heard in Catherine's peremptory voice—and then followed a third low-spoken consultation.

“Mrs. Randall,” was Mrs. Tyson's next remark, “we shall be delighted to have *you* with us, too.”

“Oh, but I think you'd so much better just leave Bappis out of it, Mrs. Tyson—though I do thank you.”

“Catherine is so set on having Bappis! I'm afraid we *can't* give it up. And of course it will only be an added pleasure to have *you* with us. Do say you'll come! Catherine is *so* earnest about this thing. I've never known her to be—— What, dearest?”—this last being evidently addressed to her daughter at her side. Joan wondered why Catherine, since she was manifestly dictating most of her mother's remarks, did not come to the telephone herself.

“May we, then, have the great pleasure of having *you* with us, Mrs. Randall?” Mrs. Tyson continued.

“Well,” Joan very reluctantly yielded, “if you prefer putting up with me rather than doing without Bappis.”



Joan turned about quickly, but she was too late; the motor was already off.

“We certainly *do*, my dear! Very well, then, it is settled. We shall call for you both in our car at two on Friday.”

“I'm awfully sorry to thrust myself upon the party, Mrs. Tyson, but it is the only way I can let Bappis go.”

A driving rain on Friday made Joan hope that the party might be called off, for not only was she sure that Catherine did not want her, but she herself certainly did not enjoy the prospect of an afternoon in Miss Tyson's company.

However, it cleared by noon, and she saw there was no escape.

She had casually mentioned the engagement to Judge Randall at breakfast.

“You are certainly faithful,” he had remarked, “to carry your guardianship to the extent of going to an animal show with Catherine Tyson! But really

it hardly seems necessary in this case that you should sacrifice yourself like that—the Tysons would of course see that Bappis— But no," he changed his mind; "I suppose you would better be with him, Joan. Better not to risk anything."

When at two o'clock the Tysons' big blue car stopped at the door, and Joan went out with Bappis, she was surprised to find Catherine alone.

"The others are waiting for us at the LaFayette," she explained.

A tête-à-tête between the two ladies might have been a bit of a strain had not Bappis' chatter on the short, rapid ride to the hotel relieved the situation.

At the door of the LaFayette they were joined by the two children—Willie Sheldon and Jessie Allen—and by a woman—a young and very elegant-looking woman dressed in black, with a rather thick motoring veil about her face and neck.

Joan was instantly and peculiarly impressed by this woman—by her extraordinarily graceful walk and bearing as she led the children out to the car; by the dignity of her manner as she acknowledged Catherine's introduction to herself—Joan failed to catch her name in the clamor of the children's voices and the chugging of the car—and by an indefinite something in her demeanor—a stiffness, almost a rigidity, as if she were holding herself in with an effort. Was she timid, Joan wondered, about riding in a motor?

Mrs. Tyson was not of the party.

Catherine placed the two children, Willie and Jessie, on either side of Joan, and drew Bappis down on the seat between her and the stranger. But he demurred, and insisted upon sitting beside "Tante Joan."

Joan, who understood him well enough never to cross him unnecessarily, asked Willie Sheldon to change places with him. She was not unaware of Catherine's cold disapproval of such indulgence of a whim. As for the lady in black, she sat strangely upright and silent, her eyes through her heavy veil seeming to fix themselves upon the seat

opposite her, where Bappis sat beside his stepmother.

In the swift, breathless ride up the avenue to the theater, Joan made one or two polite attempts to talk to the veiled stranger, but the woman, her gaze riveted upon Bappis, seemed scarcely to hear her; and Joan, deciding that she was probably a little deaf, gave up all effort to make her hear in the rushing speed at which they were riding.

In five minutes they were at the door of the theater. The chauffeur kept his seat, his hands on the wheel, his foot on the clutch—but almost instantly Catherine was down upon the pavement, lifting out Willie and Jessie, and then, reaching past Bappis, she gave her hand to Joan.

As Joan's feet touched the pavement the veiled woman clasped Bappis' arm to draw him back from the step of the car to her side, and Catherine at the same moment gave a short, sharp command to the chauffeur. "Now!" she exclaimed, and the car started.

Joan turned about quickly, but she was too late; the motor was already off, bearing away Bappis with the stranger. Bewildered, she saw it turn the corner. Impulsively she dashed through the crowd about the theater, and reached the end of the block, only to see the car driving up the avenue at a speed just escaping the menace of the law.

In a flash she knew, with an absolute certainty, that the veiled stranger was Bappis' mother.

White and trembling, she rushed back to Catherine—only to see her, with Willie and Jessie, swallowed up in the moving throng of women and children that were going into the theater.

To plunge after her and demand the truth—no, no—what was the use of that? Not a moment must be lost—that car must be followed. What must she do first? was the frantic question of her heart. A taxicab? It could never overtake that flying car—and she would not even know in what direction to follow—nor, if she did overtake

them, how to get Bappis back from his own mother.

She suddenly felt herself collapsing, physically and mentally. She clung to the electric post near which she stood to keep herself from sinking to the pavement.

When, after a moment or two, she had averted an impending faint, she tried to gather herself together—to think what she must do.

But the absolute finality of what had happened was as far as her numbed thought would go. Mechanically she began to walk toward home, trying to realize this awful thing that had happened to her. Bappis' mother had taken him! There was nothing to be done. Nothing—but to go home and tell his father.

Her own world—the comfortable, happy world in which, for the past months, she had been blooming and flourishing—fell away from under her. She was again homeless and alone—Bappis gone and her home, in which she had taken such pride, no longer her home. What new world would now be hers, she could not even ask herself—too crushing seemed this sudden smashing of her house of cards! For a house of cards it certainly had been—a husband only in appearance, a son not her own, a home of which she was not the

mistress, but the employed housekeeper. All, all false, and destined from the beginning not to stand! How could it stand, built, as it had been, upon the tragic suffering of another woman! Should she ever forget, while she breathed, that black-robed, heavily veiled figure seated before her in the motor—that mother holding herself rigidly from clasping to her breast the son whom for four years she had not seen! Joan found herself hoping fervently that Bappis would not add another wound to that lacerated soul by turning from her and demanding to be taken back to his "Tante Joan"! Yes, her own sense of undoing and even her dread of Judge Randall's pain and possible anger with her paled before her deep and burning sympathy with the mother.

Well, her own work was over. All that remained for her to do, before packing her trunk and going to her mother, was the terribly painful ordeal of summoning Judge Randall home and telling him that the thing he had dreaded had happened—Bappis' mother, after four long years, held her little son once more in her arms.

That the situation left her suddenly free to go to the man who loved her did not, in this quivering hour, enter her mind or heart.

TO BE CONCLUDED.



The Public Servant

MRS. OSCAR W. UNDERWOOD, wife of the virtual leader of the House, tells a good story on her husband to show that men prominent in legislation are indeed public servants and must obey their masters.

The first time Underwood ran for Congress, he had an engagement to speak at a small place which he could reach only by taking a fifteen-mile drive across country. Upon his arrival, he was met by his audience. It consisted of two men.

After waiting more than an hour, the ambitious young man remarked that apparently he would have no crowd and that he thought he would better go home.

"By gum!" said one of the two, "I drove fourteen miles to hear you speak, and you've got to speak to us. If you don't, we'll carry this precinct against you."

Mr. Underwood spoke.



CHARITY

BY JAMES HAY, JR.

WRITE this down on the indestructible memory of men:
Among all the handmaidens of charity, wealth is one
of the least.

Men prate of charity!

That which divides the last loaf, O Brother of Hunger, is
charity, and that which shares the one shawl, O Sister of
Rags, is charity, much more than the heralded building of hos-
pital and asylum.

We have in our hearts charity if we bestow the myrrh of
sympathy and the spikenard of understanding;

Or teach one little child that the reddened sun on evening
waters is the golden door to fairyland;

Or are kind to those beaten by the knout of poverty plaited
by the avarice of man.

And we have charity if we turn aside without ostentation to
aid the weak;

Or track no man to his undeserved hurt;

Or pursue no woman to her tears;

Or never forget that one appreciative word carried a thief
from the cross to the eternal flowers of paradise, and that the
voice of solace to a wounded heart is as precious as the ever-
lasting fragrance of the alabaster cruse a woman broke two
thousand years ago.

Charity is chivalry because it champions the burdened. It
is art because it is the loveliest of lovely thoughts. It is cour-
age because the martyrs who bore the flames for the sake of
conscience, and the sufferers who give of their strength to
help other sufferers, to-day stand in the forefront of all the
warriors of the world.

Charity is never measured in money. Its monuments are in
the hearts of those we have taught to smile.



I T was when I was eight years old that romance first dawned upon my ravished eyes. Literature had not yet supplied me with the word—the first and second readers are restricted in their choice of topics—and I had no older brothers or sisters, the prey of strange moodiness, of a fevered interest in clothes, in dancing school, or what not, to educate me as to the malady, or the gift, or whatever it was. But through some forgotten channel, there had filtered in to me the information that there were in the world strange beings known as “beaus”; that these beings were addicted to rather incomprehensible pursuits—loitering before chosen dooryards, sending valentines, sharing sticky sweets, carrying girls’ books home from school, lingering, despite masculine jeers, near the “girls’ side” of the playground during recess; sometimes even to yet more amazing customs—the use of perfumed hair oil upon locks that once proudly scorned the brush, the covering of slates with “her” initials, instead of with the counterfeit presentments of tomahawked Indians, or of “teacher” with hoofs and horns.

When “beaus” grew up, it became known to me, they blossomed into elegant and dapper young men, such as visited at one’s cousins’ houses, making

the summer evenings melodious with banjo and mandolin, taking the cousins—ours was an idyllic, unchaperoned age—out for moonlit canoe trips on the river, and eventually marrying them. And in the period after the mandolin playing, and the silvery, starlit paddling, and before the prosaic marrying, there were palpitant, sweet mysteries—hand-clasps, kisses— Ah, after all, there might be something to say in favor of being grown up! There might, after all, be compensations for living in that dull world where one did not play with dolls, or with hoops, or with bean bags; where one’s interest in tree-climbing dwindled; and where one apparently did not mind either daily baths or frequent hairdressing.

Still, I was by no means sure of this doctrine of compensation. I wished to have the vague half knowledge that I had gleaned verified by observation. I cast my eyes about me at home. The other children were, as I have said, all younger than I—clearly they were hopeless. Fathers and mothers, of course, were sent full armored into the world, and knew nothing of the soft delights of which the whisper had reached me. Almost before the world was, *they* were—admirable and indispensable, but destined solely for house-holding, marketing, dosing one for the

croup, and interfering with one's personal liberty; except at twilight time, when they were very comfortable, and strangely soft and tender. But not even in the misty half light would they repay the scrutiny of a true-love hunter—of that I was sure. Where, then, should I look? Whom should I interrogate with eyes and lips? My attention fastened itself upon Nora.

"Nora," I asked her respectfully—for Nora was making cookies in the big, quiet kitchen, and there were obvious grounds for a respectful tone; moreover, unlikely as it seemed, she might prove to be the person of whom I was in search, and that person was, in the nature of the case, sacrosanct—"Nora, were you ever in love?"

"In love, is it?" Nora laughed, and I was relieved to note that her rough, plump fingers did not cease the fashioning of the "horsecake" that was my particular and immediate interest on cooky days. I had half feared a punishment for my temerity, but curiosity had been more insistent than appetite. "The Dear Above knows where ye do be gettin' yer notions, Miss Mollie!"

"Yes, but *were* you, Nora?" I persisted.

Nora, with a flirt of her capable wrists, painted over the cookies with white of egg, powdered them with sugar and cinnamon, and whisked them into the oven. "Who's been talkin' to ye about bein' in love?" she demanded. "Sure, it's no talk at all, at all, for a little girl to be hearin' or repeatin'."

I pointed out that I should, with luck, be nine on my next birthday—that seemed to me to dispose of the little-girl taunt—and I added my firm conviction that love was a perfectly proper subject of conversation at any age.

"Anyway, I bet you are in love," I finished, triumphantly impertinent, "and that you have got a beau, and that you're afraid I'd tell mother if you told me! Oh, Nora, truly I wouldn't!"

Nora's reply was to send me "pack-in'," as she called it, from the kitchen. But a little later, playing in the side yard, I caught a glimpse of her standing by the kitchen window, her brown

head bent against it, her figure drooping. It was, I was sure, the pose of a pensive lover, and I felt some irritation with Nora for not having opened her heart to me freely on the interesting subject of the affections.

"Mother," I asked the prosaic person who controlled my life, that night, "how old is Nora?"

"Oh, about twenty-four or five," answered mother, smoothing my hair. "She's been with us four years now, and she was just past twenty, I think, when she came. Why do you ask, Mollie, dear?"

I sighed.

"I didn't know she was so old," I said. "I thought maybe she was in love, but she's too old, isn't she?"

Mother laughed. It was a pleasant sound—like a little chime of fairy bells.

"People are never too old to be in love—to be in true love," she told me, then.

"Well, is Nora, then?"

"I don't know, dear. One doesn't ask people questions about love."

"She isn't very pretty, is she?" I pursued. The knowledge that beauty and love were in some way connected had been vouchsafed me.

"Why, yes, I think she is, Mollie. She has a very sweet, kind face, and such nice eyes, and such a pretty, pink skin!"

"But she doesn't wear pretty clothes, or do her hair like Cousin Etta, that every one says is so pretty. And that I think is beautiful," I added, to clinch the matter.

Mother did not debate with me the respective claims of Cousin Etta and Nora to the apple of Venus. Instead, I think she turned the subject to some dull thing like arithmetic and "deportment," and sleep fell upon me that night as ignorant concerning the manifestations of true love as I had been in the morning.

One evening, a week or so later, I was sent to the kitchen with a message for Nora. There was a sound of voices as I opened the door. My heart beat high with hope, as the widening crack revealed a masculine figure by the stove,

but shyness stopped my feet upon the threshold.

"Come in, Miss Mollie, lamb," called Nora, with a new note in her rich voice—a note that made it a little like mother's chiming silver laugh. "Come in—don't be afraid. Sure, it's nobody at all but a friend from my parish in the ould country. Dan, this'll be little Miss Mollie I've told ye about."

Dan, tall, broad, ruddy, freckled, smiling, beamed upon me. I made my parlor curtsy and said "How do you do," very distinctly, delivered my message, and fled back to mother with great excitement.

"Oh, mother! Oh, father!" I cried to the heads of the house. "Nora's got a beau—Nora's got a beau! He's in the kitchen now. His name is Dan, and he's from her parish in the ould country!"

"How do you know he's a beau?" inquired my father, idly amused, while mother corrected my imitative brogue.

"Oh, her eyes have bright little spots in them, and her cheeks are redder than when she makes preserves, even, and she looks so glad—like you feel on a picnic morning when it doesn't rain."

"As you feel," corrected mother, while father exclaimed:

"Where the deuce did you pick up all this information on the signs and symptoms of the tender passion?"

I didn't know what he meant, then; and if I had known, I could not have told him. There must be vast stores of knowledge in each of us—race knowledge—that is suddenly released when one little key is supplied. Instinct, I dare say they call it.



"An' of course, ma'am, I'll wait. Why wouldn't I wait?"

I suppose the elders talked among themselves of another aspect of Nora's possible love affair than the romantic one in which I was so interested. I remember hearing stray sentences: "Well, of course, one must expect it; one wouldn't wish it otherwise. Only we'll never find her like again. But naturally one wouldn't ask her to give up her life just to serve one!"

I haunted the kitchen during those days. I stared Nora out of countenance in my endeavor to read signs of "true love" upon her kind, rosy face. She sang a good deal as she went briskly about her work, and there was a soft brightness, almost as humid as tears, in her gray eyes. I could not see, despite my mother's dictum, that she was as pretty as Cousin Etta, who had a cloudy gold pompadour that was my deepest admiration, and who wore very frilly gowns and many ribbons; but I liked to look at Nora in those days.

One night she was to go to a party. The whole household was agreeably agitated at the prospect—indeed, the whole family connection. It was to be a St. Patrick's ball, given by the local Irish society, and Dan was to take her. Nora consulted mother about her costume, with the pleasing result that one of Cousin Etta's less elaborate frocks was fitted over for the occasion, and that a fan, and a scarf, and satin flowers for the hair, and blue beads for her throat were all procured from similar kindly sources of supply. My conduct was exemplary for a week preceding the dance, for it was regulated by the threat: "Now, remember, if you don't behave yourself well, we shall not wake you up to see Nora before she goes to the party." But this dread deprivation did not befall me, and on the appointed evening I lay as wide awake as on Christmas Eve itself, awaiting the appearance of Nora in festal array. She was a pretty sight, memory tells me, as she stood at the nursery door, laughing and blushing and awkward in her filmy white finery, with her blue ribbons and scarf, and her pink cheeks, and starry eyes.

"Oh, Nora!" I told her, out of a full

heart, as I sat up in my bed. "Oh, Nora, you're as beautiful as the fairy princess!"

"Ah, is it turnin' my head ye'd be, Miss Mollie, darlint?" Nora answered, with a pretense of gruffness. But she came over and kissed me warmly on my fat cheek.

After that great ball I know that the elders looked hourly for the termination of Nora's service. Dan, though he might be a man of iron—which there was no reason to believe—could never have resisted her in Etta's frock and furbelows. But the half-feared, wholly-hoped-for "warning" was not given. Instead, the figure of Dan suddenly ceased to be familiar near our kitchen range, and Nora, instead of eagerly looking toward her Thursdays and Sundays, developed the habit of staying at home on those once-gala days. And the chime of little silver bells was dulled to silence in her voice.

"Nora, where's your beau?" I asked her impudently one day, when Dan had not been near for a long time. And instead of driving me from her province with a switch of her apron, or a threat of her broom, as was her custom sometimes, Nora put her head down upon the table, where she was peeling vegetables, burst into tears, and said, between sobs: "God knows, Miss Mollie!"

Frightened at the phenomenon I had evoked, I ran to mother and reported the unbelievable fact that Nora was crying. And mother, alarm on her face, handed the baby to Aunt Harriet for safe-keeping, and sped kitchenward with I know not what horrid fear in her heart. She did not come back for nearly an hour, and when she came, there was a hint of tears about her eyes, too. She took the baby absently back from Aunt Harriet, and absently she said to me: "Run out and play now, Mollie!"—hatefulest of words when uttered at the wrong time! Pouting, even grumbling, I withdrew; and it was not for a long time that I knew what Nora had told mother in the kitchen, among the carrots and the beets. She and Dan were plighted, she said; she was soon

to have given the anticipated "warning." Dan was doing "right well" at his trade of house painting; though he was a trifle wild, yet marriage was relied upon to steady him. But shortly after the St. Patrick's Day dance he had happened to "take a bit too much one night, an' he didn't go to his work the next day; an' when he did go, the boss was short an' crusty, an' Dan was not the one to be standin' that from anny man; an' he answered back—an' he was laid off. An' small harm that would have been, but he stopped by Sweeny's place, an' took a drop more than was good for him, an'—an'—" Here Nora's sobs threatened to stop the recital forever. But by and by she managed to gulp them back, and to go on with the dreary little tale. While he was still under the influence of that "drop too much," he fell in with a recruiting agent. And by and by he had come to her, white and miserable, to tell of his enlistment in the army of the United States. He had mingled his tears with hers—he was no older than she—and he had besought her to be true to him until his term of service had expired. And he had drawn rosy pictures of all that it would be possible for them to accomplish on the money that his kindly and patriarchal country would save for him during five years.

"An' of course, ma'am, I'll wait. Why wouldn't I wait? But oh, ma'am—it's a long, long time, an' him out in Arizony this blissid minute, killed by Injins, maybe. An'—an' anyway—Oh, it's soon that the days are gone whin ye're young, the days whin ye can be young together!"

Mother had comforted her, of course; had told her how swiftly five years would roll around; had interested her in the thought of all that she, too, in five years could save toward the home they planned; had quoted—or, perhaps, manufactured—cheering statistics concerning the health and longevity of the United States soldiers, declaring that fewer of them were lost in battle than there were men killed riding in street cars each year. And when she came back to Aunt Harriet

and the baby she left a reviving Nora in the kitchen.

By the time that Dan returned, of course, I had learned all about true love. I had been flower girl at Cousin Etta's wedding, and I had seen the best man on that occasion take the maid of honor in his arms behind the library door, when the bride and groom had made a safe escape from the house. Besides, I had read widely and deeply on the subject. I knew that true love was an emotion connected with moonlight and sunsets, with rose gardens and fountains playing in the sun. I knew that it throve upon a nourishment known as cruel parents, and I was aware that it laughed at locksmiths. Also, that it despised the false distinctions of the world, and that King Cophetuas were on the watch continually for beggar maids to be elevated to the thrones of the earth. And I forgot all about Dan, and about the stars that had sparkled in Nora's eyes, and the music that had pealed in her voice. Of course, people in her walk in life married—any one could see that! But, naturally, they had not the time, or the taste, or the education necessary for experiencing true love, which was an involved and complex emotion. And Nora went on working, and "laying by," and writing laborious letters in the evening, and watching for the postman in the morning—he seldom enough brought her anything, for chirography was an art in which the martial Dan did not excel—and waiting, no longer disturbed by my too eager interest in her affairs.

She seemed, even to my unobservant, indifferent eyes, to have dropped five or ten years the bright morning when she came into my mother's room with the announcement that Dan's term had expired, and that he was on his way home. Mother did not send me out to play this time. Instead, she allowed me to sit and listen—it was my hour for learning to sew under her tuition.

"Then I suppose we'll soon be losing you, Nora," said mother, repressing a sigh. "Ah, well! I'm glad of it. You must be married from here."



"Sure, ye're as lovely as a princess, Miss Mollie."

"It's kind of ye to say that, ma'am," answered Nora. "Sure, Danny's sister an' her man, they've come over since he wint away—they say we must be married from their place. They've a three-room flat on East Thirty-third Street, in New York; but—I'd like it better here, if ye really mean it, ma'am."

"Indeed, I do really mean it, Nora," answered mother warmly. Even my sated interest in romance revived a little at the prospect of a wedding under our own roof. And Nora went about the house singing in the most cheerful voice possible:

"I wish I were on yonder hill,
'Tis there I'd sit and cry my fill——"

In due time Dan made his way to our suburb, and we all shook him by the hand, and the elders wished him joy of the prospect before him. And the little sisters were as much excited at the presence of a true lover in their midst as I had been when I, too, had been a child, five years before. Dan was a good-looking fellow, with smiling eyes, and a vague laugh, and a weak chin.

Vain—one could see that, but Nora's adoring eyes fed him enough flattery to keep any vain man satisfied, so I overheard adult opinion expressed.

He came back and forth—was it for a month, or two, or three? It seemed to me, impatient for the wedding, an age. And Nora went into town on her afternoons off, and they were understood to be looking at flats suited to their means; and sometimes, it seemed, there was a cloud on Nora's forehead, and a shadow in her eyes. She revealed the cause to mother. It appeared that Dan was "too aisy" with the "back pay" that had accrued to him on the expiration of his term of service. He had treated his sister, and her "man," and her children to too many shows; he had lent the "man" money to pay an old bill.

"'Tis not that I grudge them it exactly," she told mother. "But—he hasn't found anny work himself yet. An'—it was for our settin' out that we'd counted on it——"

Ah, well! It was a sad little tale of improvidence and vanity. I can understand it now. I can understand how

the sister's family, needy, avaricious, played upon poor Dan's pitiful conceit, until they had mulcted him of the enforced savings of those five years. And I can understand why, stripped of the money, he had at the end decided to reenlist before the period had expired in which a reenlistment would stand to his credit as continuous service. And I can understand, best of all, how he dared not face Nora when he had taken the final step, and how, with clumsy fingers and dull, sad heart, he had penned her the tale the night before he left New York again. She never showed any of us the letter, though, with set face and even voice, she told mother its contents. And mother, dear, understanding soul, forebore to tell her that she was well rid of the weakling! She only bade me to use discretion in my kitchen conversation, and to be sparing of questions. Which I was, sensing tragedy, and silent in its presence.

"She ought to put him out of her mind, and marry some decent fellow," said Aunt Harriet, with authority. Aunt Harriet is a spinster by the blood in her veins as well as by the accidents of life.

"Maybe so," said mother doubtfully. "And you should tell her so, Mary!" said Aunt Harriet firmly.

"Not yet," said mother, with almost equal firmness.

I think that mother did, after two or three years, venture to make a few worldly-wise remarks to Nora of the tenor suggested by Aunt Harriet. Nora had smiled and dimpled at first, at the mention of the obvious infatuation of the German grocer's assistant, who came for orders; she was too thorough a woman not to enjoy her conquests after a fashion. But she had sighed and shaken her head at the conclusion that mother hesitatingly drew.

"I don't know why it is," she said, "but I don't seem to care for none of them that way. An', after all, ma'am, Danny—he never gave me the go-by for anny other girl. If he had, it would have been different. I—I hear from him sometimes," she ended, with falter-

ing accents, and half-shamed eyes fixed on mother. "An', annyway, Mis' Carrington, dear, ye know ye don't want to be lookin' for another cook!" She ended with a laugh: "Sure, I'm as fond of yer childer as if they were me own."

I do not put it beyond mother to have kissed her for that. But I know that she told her, seriously, that the treasure of her heart was too great to be spilled on other people's children.

"Sure, I won't be as old as Methusalem when Danny gets out this time," replied Nora; and at that hint of her hopes and intentions, mother gave up the uncongenial task of being worldly-wise.

At the time of his second discharge, Danny did not even return to the East from the post where he was stationed. He reached Chicago on his journey, and there he parted company with his back pay to some predatory gentlemen with whom he had been drinking overnight. And when the news was received in our house, there was a sudden cessation in the kitchen of the tunes that had been lilting through it for a fortnight past.

"She said," reported mother to the family circle, from whose councils I, at eighteen, was not always banished, "that if she had known in time, she would have sent him a telegram not to reenlist, but to come on East—she had enough saved up, herself! But he didn't tell her about it all until after he had taken the irrevocable step."

"Good heavens!" I cried. "Hasn't she any pride? Does she want the man to know that she can't live happily without him? Does she think that that is the way to keep or to win a man's affections?"

Father looked at me over his glasses; mother's eyes were discreetly lowered to her sewing, but I caught the sternly repressed dimple at the corner of her lips—she was actually laughing at me! But Aunt Harriet approved my sentiment.

"Mollie is quite right," she said. "There is such a thing as proper pride, there is such a thing as self-respect. And there is such a thing"—she ended



"What is true love, gran'pa?" lisped the baby, looking up from her blocks.

darkly—"as unworthy, unwomanly infatuation!"

"Oh, come now, Harriet!" said mother, looking up from her work. "I'm not going to let you call Nora names!"

"It's not love she feels," I declared oracularly. I felt that I was an authority on the subject; I had had my first bona-fide proposal, and I had rejected it with much dignity because I had been aware that my feeling for the proposer was not "love." Who should speak with finality if not I? "It's not love. It's—er—mere habit. Love must be based upon respect, upon companionability. What respect can Nora have

for that contemptible idiot? What companionability is there between them? They haven't been together six months in ten years. It's just sheer stupidity, if you ask me!"

"Mollie's quite right," declared Aunt Harriet loyally. And, as my parents were silent, I concluded triumphantly that they were convinced by my masterly, though brief, exposition of the nature of love.

Nevertheless, I was glad that Nora was the one who laced, and buttoned, and hooked me on my wedding morning, four years later. She looked at me proudly from out her fine, gray eyes, set in tiny crow's-feet now.

"Sure, ye're as lovely as a princess, Miss Mollie," she told me. And I, remembering the night I had lain awake to see her start for the dance with Dan, and the full-hearted flattery I had poured upon her, felt my eyes fill with tears. That dewy, sweet, young girl that she had been—this grizzled, lined, middle-aged woman that she was—and all the empty years of waiting that lay between!

When our old home was broken up, I begged her to come to my new one. She shook her gray head in refusal, and she smiled upon me sadly.

"I'm 'most ashamed to tell ye what I'm goin' to do, Miss Mollie," she said. "I could have told yer mother, God rest her! She—she always understood everything."

"Tell me," I said. "I understand more things than I used, Nora."

"Yes—ye're growin' like her. Ah, well, then, miss, I'll tell ye. Ye'll mind Danny?"

Yes, I remembered Danny.

"He's out of the service for good, ye know. That is, in a manner of speakin', he is. He's too old to reënlist." I nodded, waiting.

"Well, he's an awful sufferer with rheumatism— He got it in the Philippines. He's goin' into a soldiers' home, out in Ohio." She blurted out this fact with an air of hurry.

"He's got the right to look to the government for care," she went on breathlessly. "After the way he's given his life to it. An'—an' he's gone into a soldiers' home, out in Ohio."

"Yes," I said, when the pause threatened to be too long.

"Well, Miss Mollie—yer mother'd understand. I'm goin' out there—it don't matter where I live—I've got enough to keep me, an' annyway, my workin' days they're not over yet, praise the saints! I'm goin' out there. When he comes out—days he is out visitin' an' that—" She burst into sudden tears. "There niver was anny one at all for me but him," she sobbed, "since we was boy an' girl together at home in the ould counthry. I'm goin' out there where he is."

"At her age," said Aunt Harriet, "it's indecent."

"Not at her age," I objected. "Perhaps, if she had been younger—"

My father looked up from the lonely armchair he has beside my hearth.

"Or if it's not indecency, it's insanity," Aunt Harriet went on belligerently.

"I think," said father musingly, "that it is only—true love. I think that is what your mother would have called it, my dear," he added to me.

"True love?" lisped the baby, looking up from her blocks. "What is true love, muvver? What is true love, gran'pa?"

Only Aunt Harriet could define it for her, however. But I am wondering if, when, by and by, I tell her the story of Nora, she will dimly understand, and will cherish the legend of the Irish servant in her heart along with Elaine, and Griselda, and Penelope.



Heroism in Skirts

ALONG the coasts and in the harbors of the United States there are twenty-seven women who work in the lighthouses, and keep the great beacons burning to warn ships of danger. One of these, Mrs. Juliet E. Nichols, a widow, who is the keeper of a light on the California coast, has a record of having spent twenty hours and thirty-five minutes without food or rest in ringing a bell in a heavy fog.



A COWPUNCH JUDAS

—BY
CHARLES
ALDEN
SELTZER

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARENCE ROWE

I RECKON you wouldn't say that that's the same sun which has been blisterin' our backs all day?" said Coleman, a belligerent note in his voice.

Santa Fe halted his pony, and gazed back over the Dry Bottom Trail. The sun hung low over the horizon—a great ball of glowing gold that cast an effulgent expanse of yellow light over the scorched and dusty world. All day the heat had been nearly unbearable, but now, though waves of it danced on the baked alkali, and little whirlwinds of dust rose and swirled in a breeze that blighted growing things, there had come a perceptible change in the atmosphere—a suggestion of coolness that pre-saged relief and comfort.

"There ain't no use of any one havin' two suns," resumed Coleman witheringly; "no use a-tall. An' even if a man did have two, what's the sense of jugglin' them around?" He gazed accusingly at Santa Fe, as if half convinced that that gentleman was somehow concerned in the government of things firmamental. The latter denied the gentle imputation with a deprecatory smile which seemed only to inflame Coleman.

"Take that sun there," he resumed, pointing an accusing finger at the offending orb of glowing gold; "it ain't in no ways like the one which has been sizzlin' us all day. That other one was white an' blurry an' hotter'n hell, an'

this one's got some coolness in it. They've been switched! Why in blazes couldn't we have this one durin' the day, when it's hot, an' have the hot one now, when it's gettin' cooler? I just reckon that I could run this here little ol' shebang of a world a heap better'n the three-card-monte man which is runnin' her——"

He stopped talking suddenly, for he observed that Santa Fe was not listening, but was looking at a placard attached to a post that formed a corner of a pasture fence. Therefore, his curiosity aroused, Coleman spurred his pony closer, and leaned forward to read:

\$100 REWARD!

The above sum will be paid for the arrest of a man named Bill Coleman, alias Denver, who, with a confederate, held up and robbed the express messenger at the Lone Wolf Tavern on the nineteenth of last month. The sheriff of Colfax County is hereby authorized to pay the above sum to any one delivering the aforesaid Bill Coleman into his custody.

Issued by authority of

TOM HAMMOND,
Sheriff of Union County.

Santa Fe turned from the placard and regarded Coleman with a quizzically humorous glance. "Here's somethin' more interestin' than the sun to think about," he said.

Coleman was giving all his attention to the placard, and apparently he did

not hear Santa Fe. So the latter continued insinuatingly. "I wonder if the sheriff of Colfax has got a description of that there man Coleman?" he questioned.

Coleman's face reddened under the alkali dust upon it. "What if he has?" he sneered.

Santa Fe heaved a long-drawn sigh. "Nothin' much," he returned. "Only if we keep on goin' we'll be in Lazette in about an hour, an' I've heard that the sheriff of Colfax hangs out in Lazette mostly."

"You're worryin' a heap about it," grinned Coleman.

"Why, sure. But not about myself. That there notice don't say a heap about Coleman's partner—mebbe he ain't considered important enough. It's Bill Coleman that I'm some disturbed about; I wouldn't want him to be took in by no sheriff—which would happen if you was to go into Lazette."

"Mebbe it wouldn't be exactly wise for me to go there," agreed Coleman. "But I'm powerful hungry."

"Reckon we could get some grub somewhere around here," offered Santa Fe. "I seen a shack down the trail a piece. Likely this pasture fence belongs to it."

They rode down along the pasture fence, and the dusk found them sitting in their saddles in front of a little adobe cabin that sat on the sloping bank of a small river. A woman had come to the door of the cabin, and now stood in it, leaning against the jambs, watching the two men with inquiring eyes.

"Our nags is plumb tired," volunteered Santa Fe. "We'd like to put up here overnight—an' we're needin' grub mighty bad. If your man's anywheres around, we'd like to——"

A mournful smile on the woman's face brought Santa Fe's speech to an abrupt ending. "My man is dead," she said flatly. "Ben Allen hung him about two months ago." Her eyes flashed with resentment.

"Who's Ben Allen?" questioned Santa Fe.

"I forgot you were strangers," ex-

plained the woman. "Ben Allen is the sheriff of Colfax."

"Shucks!" The exclamation dropped from Santa Fe's lips with a sharpness that drew a quick glance from the woman.

"Do you know Ben Allen?" she asked suspiciously.

"No, I can't say that we do. An', what's more, we ain't wantin' to know him," returned Santa Fe, squinting owlishly at Coleman, whose face had reddened again.

"I am glad of that," earnestly declared the woman. "You can get something to eat here. But you will have to bunk outside—the cabin isn't big enough." She hesitated. "But why don't you go on to Lazette? It's only three miles."

Santa Fe regarded her soberly. "My pardner ain't feelin' any too good," he lied gravely. "I reckon it's the heat; he's been complainin' that the Lord is runnin' two suns—which ain't a healthy state of mind for a man to be in."

"Hell!" began Coleman truculently. "I reckon you think you know a lot more about them suns than the——"

"So if you'll just trot out some grub," said Santa Fe, cutting in on Coleman's speech, "we'll be mighty thankful. Also we'll pay for what we eat."

It had occurred to Coleman that perhaps he had been wrong about the suns, and so during the meal that followed he sat silent, deeply engrossed in his celestial puzzle.

But Santa Fe talked more than a little to the woman. She was about fifty, good looking after a manner, with the ghost of a past refinement lingering about her. They talked carelessly on indifferent subjects, while Coleman ate and puzzled with the suns and went off into a half doze. After the meal both men went outside to look after their horses. This task done, Coleman sought a tree, curled up in his blankets at the base of it, and, with his saddle for a pillow, dropped off to sleep, and forthwith began dreaming of a sun that no man could "switch."

But Santa Fe did not go to sleep. After watching Coleman prepare his

bed for the night, Santa Fe went slowly back to the cabin to look for the woman. She had interested him.

He found her seated on the narrow porch. In response to her invitation, he took a chair near her, and they resumed their talk where they had left off at supper. They talked long. The noises of the night came to them on the porch; a rabbit hawk on the dead limb of a tree near them made queer noises to its mate; a bullfrog from the river croaked dismally; wild doves cooed; from some great distance came the bark of a coyote.

The moonlight straggled down through the trees full upon the woman. Her face was pale; Santa Fe could see deep lines in it that had not been noticeable in the dusk—lines that seemed to reflect sorrow.

"You say your boy's just out of the hospital, an' wants you to come to him? Why don't you go—you say you don't like it here?"

"There's the money to be thought of," returned the woman slowly. "I had a little left when my man died, and I raised more by selling my stock and such things. But that all went to my boy—he needed it. It cost a lot of money to take care of him. Perhaps I should have gone to him while I still had a little money left, but they kept writing that he would soon be home. And so I didn't go. And then he had a relapse."

"Who wrote to you?"

"They at the hospital. They said the boy wanted to come out here when he got well. And now he has changed his mind."

Santa Fe pondered. "An' now he's there without money, an' you're here without it. He can't come here, an' you can't go there. I reckon that's about the way it figgers out when you come right down to it—leavin' out all the whys an' wherefores."

The woman nodded affirmatively.

"You ast any one here for help?"

The woman's eyes flashed. "No!" she returned spiritedly. "I haven't asked anybody. I wouldn't ask any-

body. They thought my man was a thief, and they had him hanged!"

Santa Fe looked steadily into the shadows of the near-by trees. "Where's your son stayin' at?" he inquired.

"In New Hampshire."

"Whew!" exclaimed Santa Fe, and became silent again.

Presently the woman moved and cleared her throat. "I'd like to go to him," she said, a queer catch in her voice.

Santa Fe's teeth clicked in sympathy, his lips grew grim and straight. He was thinking of his own mother. "I expect it costs a heap to travel there—to New Hampshire?" he said.

The woman started. "The agent over at Lazette said seventy dollars would take me." She laughed flatly. "But seventy dollars is quite a bit of money when you haven't got it," she added, "isn't it?"

"I reckon it is," returned Santa Fe. He slowly reached into a trousers pocket and withdrew his hand, meditatively jingling a few silver coins. "H'm!" he sniffed contemptuously. "I ain't exactly no gold mine myself." He looked again at the woman. "What kind of a guy is this Ben Allen?" he questioned. He saw the woman's lips curl, and he laughed softly. "I expect he ain't none of them sympathetic kind?" he observed.

He sat silent while the woman related an incident that served to illustrate Ben Allen's character. The incident had to do with herself. Ben Allen had tried to make love to her. She assured Santa Fe that Allen's conduct had caused her to suspect that he had more to do with her husband's death than his official actions indicated. Perhaps he had trapped her husband into stealing the cattle. She was positive that her husband had not been a thief. And Ben Allen had lied about her, for she had had no success in trying to obtain honest work in Lazette.

"I expect he must be a mighty mean man," remarked Santa Fe when the woman had concluded. "Yes, that's just what he is," he repeated, his gaze on the moon that was slowly rising



"I wish I could go to my boy," sobbed the woman.

above the treetops; "he's a mighty mean man." Sympathy for her had brought a peculiar glint into his eyes.

He saw the woman's hands rise to her face, saw an unmistakable shudder pass over her. He clenched his teeth hard, and gulped painfully, a murderously impotent rage against Allen gripping him.

"I wish I could go to my boy," sobbed the woman.

Santa Fe was up in an instant and at her side, one hand laid reverently on her head. "Don't cry, ma'am," he comforted hoarsely; "mebbe it can be fixed up for you."

He could no longer bear the sight

of her grief, so he abruptly descended from the porch, and disappeared into the shadows of the trees. He stood there for a long time, watching the woman. Presently he saw her rise and disappear into the cabin. He heard the door slam behind her, and an instant later the light within had gone out, and the cabin was bathed in darkness.

For a long time after the light was extinguished, Santa Fe stood silent in the shadows of the trees. He was tired, but he had no thought of sleep. A little later he stole over to the base of the tree where Coleman was sleeping, standing near, and looking down at him. The sleeper stirred, and Santa Fe

dodged back into the shadows of some shrubbery, crouching there guiltily.

Ten minutes later he was creeping stealthily down the pasture fence toward the post which bore the placard that he and Coleman had read after the latter had scathingly arraigned the ruler of the universe for trying to foist two suns upon an innocent and powerless humanity. He came to the place presently, and for a long time, with the moonlight streaming over his shoulder, he stood before the placard, reading.

"A hundred dollars!" he said, after a time, a strange hoarseness in his voice. "A hundred, an' she needs seventy. That'd leave thirty." He became silent, and with a finger went over the sign, studying out each word slowly. "The sheriff of Colfax is hereby authorized to pay the above sum to any one delivering the afore-said Bill Coleman into his custody." He looked long at these words. "I'd cert'nly like to have her go to her boy," he said; "I don't like to see no woman suffer thataway." He studied the sign again. "'Into his cus-tod-y.' I'd get a hundred, an' that would leave me thirty. It's risky, but I ain't goin' to stand around an' see no mother a-yearnin' for her boy."

He sneaked back the way he had come, but this time he did not go near Coleman. Instead, he stole around to the stable, and threw the saddle and bridle on his pony. Then he led the animal through some underbrush near the cabin, speaking softly to it and

stroking its muzzle lest a sudden neigh awaken Coleman and the widow. He found a narrow trail leading down into a shallow crossing of the river, and waded knee-deep into the water, leading the pony. Once on the other side of the stream, he mounted, and, after riding cautiously for a quarter of a mile, he gave the animal the spurs.

Three miles it was to Lazette, the widow had said. But after riding about

half the distance Santa Fe halted in a small wood and looked about him. It was dark here, except for spots on the trail where the moonlight straggled down through the foliage. Santa Fe dismounted, and poked around in the nondescript brush beside the trail. A few minutes later, his face wreathed with a smile of grim satisfaction, he remounted his pony, and continued down the trail toward Lazette.

He had no difficulty in finding the sheriff. A man in one of the saloons directed him to a private house at the edge of town, and Allen himself answered the knock, appearing in the doorway in his night-shirt and trousers, a kerosene lamp in one hand and a six-shooter in the other. He held the lamp outstretched, and looked inquiringly at Santa Fe. "Well," he said, his inspection finished, "what you wantin'?"

"You the sheriff?" questioned Santa Fe in reply.

"Yes," returned Allen; "you lookin' for me?" He caught Santa Fe's nod, and took a step backward. "Come in," he invited; "we can talk better."



"You the sheriff?" questioned Santa Fe in reply.

Santa Fe demurred. "There ain't no occasion to do much talkin'," he said. "What I'm wantin' you to do ain't for to be advertised."

"That's different," returned Allen, looking keenly out at his visitor. "I'll be out right away."

He disappeared, closing the door after him, and Santa Fe stood without, silent and grim, until the sheriff reappeared, fully dressed. He came down from the step, and stood near Santa Fe. "What's the game?" he inquired.

"Ever hear of a feller named Bill Coleman?"

"You him?" flashed back Allen, as his right hand streaked for his pistol butt.

There was a little contempt in Santa Fe's voice: "If I was, it's awful likely that I'd be runnin' around advertisin' it. But I'm glad to see that you've heard of him," he added as Allen's hand fell away from the holster. "It makes things so much easier. How bad you wantin' Coleman?"

"'Bout a hundred dollars worth," was Allen's quick return.

"Then I reckon you an' me kin talk business. You got a hundred on you?"

"I've got a hundred in the house," assured Allen. "Talk rapid."

"When I see the dust I loosen up my gab," returned Santa Fe slowly. "I ain't sayin' nothin' till then."

"How do I know——" began Allen, but stopped when he saw Santa Fe's lips curl a little.

"Of course you don't know," said Santa Fe. "Mebbe I'm four-flushin'. But you've got to take that chanct. I know where Bill Coleman is, an' I'm showin' you when I get the hundred. Otherwise there ain't nothin' doin'. You're riskin' your hundred, an' I'm riskin' my hide. I reckon that's a fair shake."

Santa Fe saw Allen's hesitation, and his lips curled again. Of course, any man who would take advantage of a woman in distress could not be expected to exhibit any degree of nerve or courage. He might have known that. He was suddenly filled with a disgust

with himself for coming to Allen on such an errand. He backed away, intending to mount his pony. But before he took a second step Allen spoke. "I'm takin' a chance," he said coldly; "but I'm warnin' you——"

"Aw, hell!" broke in Santa Fe, with a sudden excess of contempt for the sheriff. "You make me sick! I ain't none scared of you doin' anything to me. What I'm wantin' is a hundred for peachin' on Coleman. Do I get it?"

"You get it," returned Allen. He turned and entered the house, emerging again quickly, jangling some coin in a leather bag. He held it up so that Santa Fe could see. "It's here," he said. "You get it when you show me Bill Coleman."

"Correct!" Santa Fe caught his pony, mounted, and, followed by the sheriff, loped rapidly down the street toward the trail he had taken on his way into town.

He spoke no word to the sheriff until they reached the wood where he had dismounted on the way in. Then he slowed up, allowing Allen to ride beside him. "This here country ain't no great shucks for trails," he said shortly. "No," admitted Allen, "it ain't. Still, there's enough of them; there ain't much travel."

"I reckon this here trail's the best one into Lazette?"

The sheriff laughed. "The best one?" he said. "Yes, I reckon you might say that. It's the only one."

Santa Fe slowly drew ahead again. During the rest of the trip he said no other word to Allen. Half an hour later they came to the crossing of the river, and Santa Fe dismounted, and, admonishing the sheriff to silence, waded the crossing. Then, still leading their ponies, the two men threaded a careful way through the underbrush near the cabin, and came out finally at a point near the tree where Santa Fe had left Coleman. In the clear moonlight they had no trouble in locating the sleeping man, and they came upon him softly. Coleman was snoring peace-



"I ain't tellin' you again," said Santa Fe sharply. "Get them paws up!"

fully, and made no move when the sheriff plucked his gun from its holster.

Standing in the shadow of the tree trunk, watching the sleeping man, Santa Fe reached out a hand to the sheriff. "I'm takin' that hundred now," he said; "I've done what I agreed to do."

Allen laughed softly. "Yes," he admitted, "you've showed me a man. But I ain't sure it's Coleman. Accordin' to the description I've got of him, this might be him, but I'm makin' sure." He drew back a little, shoved the muzzle of his six-shooter toward the sleeping man, and softly called: "Coleman! Coleman!"

The latter stirred uneasily.

"Coleman!" again called the sheriff. Coleman sneered. "Them there two suns——" he began, and sat up, blink-

ing into the muzzle of the sheriff's six-shooter. "Who in hell's wantin' me?" he demanded truculently, scrambling to his feet. And now, fully awake, he realized his predicament, and reached for his holster.

"She's gone," mocked the sheriff. "Get up on your hind legs an' travel. It's the sheriff of Colfax that's doin' the talkin'." He turned to Santa Fe. "I reckon he answered to his name," he said; "I'm obliged to you. Here's your money—you've got it comin'." He passed the bag of coin over to Santa Fe.

And now for the first time since waking, Coleman saw Santa Fe. His eyes widened, their expression malignant. "You damned Judas!" he snarled, taking a step forward. "You—you——"

He suddenly halted, his shoulders drooping. "Well, I'll be damned!" he concluded.

"I reckon that's all," said Santa Fe, his eyes shifting nervously. "You've got him, an' I'm hittin' the breeze to Dry Bottom." He mounted his pony, and rode furiously down along the pasture fence and deep into the river wood. But once out of sight of Coleman and the sheriff, he reined in his pony, and, dismounting, returned toward the cabin, moving stealthily, keeping himself and the pony well hidden. Standing in the shadows at the edge of the wood, he saw Coleman throw saddle and bridle on his pony, the sheriff standing near, menacing him with his weapon; saw them both mount and ride away, traveling slowly down the trail toward Lazette.

As they disappeared, Santa Fe came out of his concealment, rode furiously to the cabin, dismounted, hammered on the door, and when it was opened by the widow, abruptly thrust a double handful of silver dollars into her hands, pocketing some himself. "There's your seventy dollars, ma'am!" he said. "Go to your boy!"

Before she could voice her thanks, he was in the saddle. He did not dismount at the crossing, but rode through it at a gallop, the water splashing high in front of him. Once over the crossing, he urged the pony a little way down the river, through a narrow defile between some hills, riding recklessly. He got out of the defile, and swept to a level plain, racing across this at whirlwind speed, sparing neither the pony nor himself. He tore around another hill and down into a valley, jumped a deep, wide washout, and in half an hour struck the edge of a small wood. He rode deep into this, and, after halting for an instant to get his bearings, dismounted, and crept forward into the shadow of some bushes that rose beside a trail—the trail he had taken to Lazette.

He lay here for a long time, panting from his exertions, and listening intently. After a time a sound came to his ears, and a grim smile reached his face

as he rose to his feet and crouched in the shadows, his six-shooter in hand. Then before him on the trail appeared Coleman, riding with bowed head, and behind him, at a short distance, a somber figure in the moonlight, rode the sheriff. Coleman reached Santa Fe—passed him. But as Allen reached the brush behind which Santa Fe crouched, the latter rose up out of the shadows and confronted him.

"Hands up, you mangy son of a gun!" he said.

The sheriff's pony came to a halt; the sheriff sat in the saddle, looking at Santa Fe with a sort of wondering surprise.

"I ain't tellin' you again," said Santa Fe sharply. "Get them paws up!"

The hands went slowly up. Coleman had gone on a little distance, and was now sitting in a patch of moonlight, his face wreathed with a huge grin. He dismounted as Santa Fe spoke to him.

"Get his gun!" he said, indicating the sheriff.

"I reckon it's got through me now," said Allen as Coleman deftly plucked the sheriff's and his own weapon from somewhere about the former's person.

"What's got through you?" sneered Santa Fe.

"The reason you gassed so much about this trail. I'd been wonderin'."

"Wonder some more," jeered Santa Fe. "What's goin' to happen to you?"

"I give it up," returned Allen lugubriously.

"That shows good sense," grinned Santa Fe. "It ain't much that's goin' to happen. Just climb down from your cayuse, an' sling your claws around this here tree, takin' care to hug it middlin' tight." He indicated a tree near him, and watched the sheriff dismount and approach it, clasping his arms around it. Coleman came forward with a rope, and proceeded to bind the sheriff securely to the tree. Then he turned to Santa Fe, grinning joyously.

"I didn't know just what you was up to, you ol' hoss thief," he said; "but I kind of suspected that you wasn't goin' to play no Judas with your ol' side kicker."

Lazette's saloons were still ablaze with light when Santa Fe and Coleman rode into town a little later. As becomes men who for a long time have been denied the few meager luxuries that their environment permits, they were presently at one of the bars, drinking. At the third drink Santa Fe looked over the top of his glass at Coleman. "Ain't half bad," he grinned.

"There ain't no two suns botherin' me any more," remarked Coleman.

"Only one thing is botherin' me," returned Santa Fe. He spoke to the barkeeper. "We stopped for grub at a shack a few miles out on the Dry Bottom Trail," he said. "A widow was runnin' the place. I didn't get her name. Mebbe you wouldn't mind tellin' me——"

The barkeeper's grin interrupted Santa Fe. "A widow?" he said, surveying Santa Fe with a new interest. "I reckon you mean Cattle Kate. She ain't a widow any more'n you're one. Tells strangers she's got a boy in the

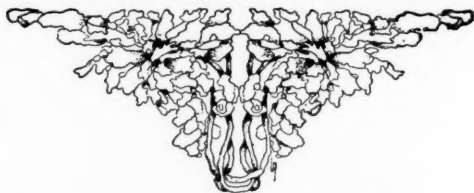
East that she's wantin' to go to see. All in her brain box. But it gets her the dust; any stranger'll pass the hat when she gets off that sentiment stuff. She's been tellin' strangers that for most a year now. There's no end of suckers believe her." He laughed. "I don't reckon she got any of your money?" he added.

"Well, no," gravely returned Santa Fe; "not scarcely." He and Coleman drank again—in silence. Then Santa Fe led the way outside. As they mounted their ponies Coleman leaned over toward Santa Fe, grinning.

"Judas got stung this trip," he remarked.

Santa Fe jangled the coins in his pocket. "You might call it that," he returned, with a laugh, "but I've got the thirty pieces of silver. So I reckon if any one's stung it's Allen. He didn't get nothin'."

"He did," grinned Coleman as they rode away in the moonlight; "he got some experience."



Another Famous Birthplace

HENRI MARTIN, the Swiss diplomat, claims that the self-confidence and self-respect that all Americans entertain for themselves are not only refreshing, but also one of the great sources of the power and wealth of the United States. To illustrate this, he tells the following story:

He was showing some of his distinguished countrymen around Washington, and, in the course of the day, they took a ride on a sight-seeing automobile. The lecturer on the car rattled off with great effect facts and statistics about the various show places of the city. Apparently there was hardly a building about which he did not have a stream of interesting information. Suddenly, while the car was going through a rather obscure section of the town, the megaphone artist shouted:

"On your right is the birthplace of William Henry Howard!"

His hearers looked puzzled, but, as he did not go into any explanations, they refused to show their ignorance by asking any questions. Mr. Martin, however, was curious, and did not mind showing it. At the end of the trip he went up to the guide and slipped a piece of money into his hand.

"Who is this William Henry Howard, anyhow, captain?" asked Martin.

"Me!" replied the lecturer, unabashed.



Comfort

By Wallace Irwin

ILLUSTRATED
BY H.V. MAYER

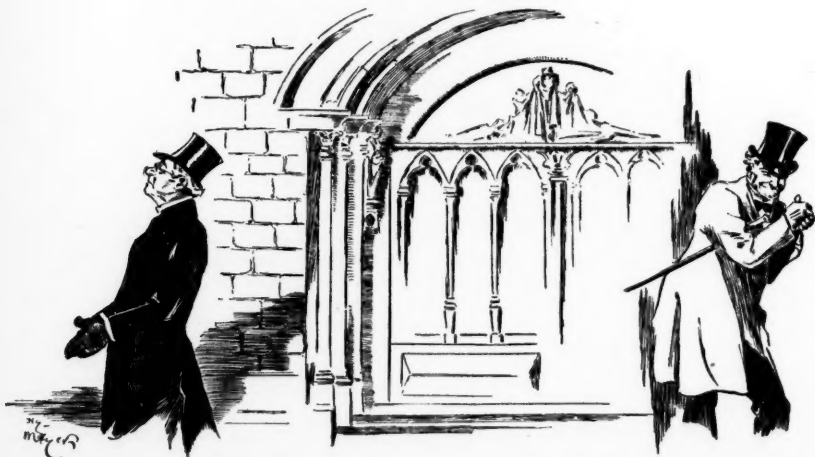
A PREACHER stood at his desk,
And preached for an hour or two.
His theme was not garish;
It pleased a rich parish,
And tickled the founder's pew.
And the gist of the note he blew
To open the Pearly Gate
Was "ready salvation
And infant damnation,
And pass the collection plate."

Now the man in the founder's pew
Was good for the pastor's pay,
Though he'd grown very wealthy
By ways that were stealthy
And means that I blush to say.
But the preacher he whanged away
At his regular Sunday rate,
On "ready salvation,
And infant damnation,
And pass the collection plate."

A saint in a niche near by,
 He gazed with a scornful stare,
 As to say, "You old reacher,
 Were you a true preacher,
 You'd lift up the founder's hair.
 You'd tilt at corruption's lair
 And the money that breeds with shame.
 Oh, why this oration
 On infant damnation?
 It's the old uns that need the flame."

But the founder, asleep in his pew,
 Dreamed not of the golden taint.
 For he was the master
 Of sermon and pastor,
 And what cared he for the saint?
 Deep-mouthed the organ's plaint
 Bore to his dreamful pate
 A harmonization
 Of "infant damnation
 And pass the collection plate."

So the service at last was done,
 And the founder, in passing out,
 Serenely uplifted
 The pastor so gifted
 By wisdom and truth devout.
 "What sinner," he said, "could doubt
 After hearing you demonstrate,
 In syllables rolling,
 A truth so consoling,
 That it fills the collection plate?"



THE LATE MRS. WILLIAM RANKIN

BY
LOUISE DRISCOLL



Author of

"The Spirit of the Law,"

"Votes for Women," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY
SIGURD SHOU

WHEN Mrs. William Rankin died, the neighbors came in, pitying, and folded her worn hands to unaccustomed stillness on her breast.

"Rest, you poor thing!" whispered Mrs. Davis, bending above the bier. She laid a white rose in the waxen hand, and stepped back to reply, in solemn kind, to the slow, smileless bend of Miss Abby Tilton's best bonnet. Miss Abby made a stately entrance, and stood by the coffin, looking long into the quiet face there; so strangely quiet it was now, and unresentful of scrutiny. Mrs. Davis glanced at the dead woman with a touch of unnecessary anxiety.

"She hated Abby Tilton like cold pizen," reflected the good neighbor, "and now she can't help herself. Well, it's awful funny." She lingered, moved by deference to Mrs. William Rankin's late prejudices, while Abby Tilton took rapid inventory of the contents of the best room.

"There ain't been a thing changed," concluded Miss Tilton, in a stage whisper; "not a blessed thing." There was a touch of greediness in the glance that moved swiftly in search of change or sign of wear. Mrs. Davis waited, silent, feeling herself champion of the dead. "Of course, I'd have kept it stylish," murmured Miss Tilton. She was the village milliner, and it was her business to be stylish. "I believe in being up to date," she said, throwing

out a hint of her fall opening, skillfully blended with a slight disparagement for the late Mrs. Rankin, yet speaking in that curious, unnatural tone, hushed for the presence of death.

Abby Tilton had expected to marry William Rankin herself, and she had chosen the furniture for the best room of his farmhouse, not this farm, but a smaller one a few miles farther back in the country. They had quarreled just before the wedding day, and had parted in anger, and then, in a very short time, William Rankin had married Mary Stevens, the younger daughter of old Joel Stevens, who had died suddenly that spring, and left his two daughters alone to wait for the harvest he had sown. Mary and Eva had made amicable settlement of the estate. Mary had married William Rankin, and Eva had moved her belongings over to Milton, where she had established a little home for herself. William had sold his farm and come to work on the crops Joe Stevens had planted, and had brought the furniture Abby Tilton had chosen for the best room.

Abby Tilton had enlarged her millinery establishment, and invited further patronage from all who wished to be truly stylish, but Mrs. William Rankin had not been a good customer. Mrs. William Rankin hadn't bought many hats. Early and late she had toiled. She had been a famous cook, her but-



Jones Corners used to look at her sometimes on Sunday mornings, when she followed William up the church aisle, and whisper behind gloved hands.

ter had brought high prices in the markets. She never had had any hired help. Jones Corners used to look at her sometimes on Sunday mornings, when she followed William up the church aisle, and whisper behind gloved hands—a gesture fondly supposed to conceal the fact that Jones Corners spoke at all—that Abby Tilton had had a lucky escape, for Mrs. William Rankin did not seem a happy woman.

Abby Tilton wore the gayest of her own creations, and flaunted her prosperity before the congregation. The door of the best room in the Rankin house was seldom opened, and the years went by—gray years that were like sisters who could not be told apart. Mary grew thinner, and her body was bent under the weight of labor upon it. Her

pretty color went like some forgotten flower, and her hair grew thin, worn at the temples, and streaked with yellow-gray. She was a young woman when she died, not forty yet, but she seemed old, she was so joyless. Everybody blamed William Rankin.

"Well, she ain't had so much she's sorry to go," remarked Peter Davis, when his wife told him she had visited the Rankin Farm. Every one called it the Rankin Farm, though the deed was in Mary Stevens' name. Old Joel Stevens was forgotten. Eva came over from Milton in answer to a telegram. Speculation was rife at the Corners.

"Wonder what Eva'll do?" was on every one's lips.

"Do you suppose he'll take Abby Tilton now?" inquired the gossips.

But it was not easy to think of Abby Tilton taking Mary's place on the farm. Abby kept hired help, both in her home and her shop. Jones Corners thought

she didn't know how to make butter. "He'll have a hard time finding any one that'll work like Mary did," said Jones Corners. Then it was learned that Mary had left a will.

It seemed strange that Mary should leave a will, because she was the kind of person who always appears to be doing things without heart, pressed by necessity. She had left her property to be divided equally between her husband and her sister, and had asked Eva to come and keep house for William. It seemed that the farm had really belonged to Mary all the time. William had put all his money into improvements, and had greatly increased the value of the place, but it was all in her name. They had never spoken of this, no question had ever arisen. William

was surprised to learn that all his work had really gone to an end that Mary might have left away from him if she had wished. But it seemed she had chosen to have Eva come and live with him.

Eva was fat and comfortable. She brought a hired girl with her when she came over from Milton. William had been uncomfortable, as a man unused to doing anything for himself must be when service is suddenly withdrawn. He tried awkwardly to help himself. He was really very glad to see Eva. She looked sharply for some sign of objection to the hired girl, whose name was inappropriately Lily, but William made no objection. He apologized for the disorder, which he seemed to think greater than it really was. Eva was watching for this. She could remember how Mary had swept, and dusted, and polished, and scrubbed. Eva had not made many visits to her old home of late years. She had not been comfortable there.

"He needn't to think I'm going to keep it like Mary did," she said to herself, as she looked about the house. Everywhere she found signs of the most scrupulous care. She almost hated William when she saw the paint worn by repeated cleaning, and the carpets swept to the nap. Lily clumped about the kitchen, preparing the evening meal, and Eva went into the best room and looked at her sister, worn like the paint and the carpets.

"He's led her a life of it," she whispered resentfully.

She noticed that the casket was a fine one. "He ain't spared his money there." She gave him grudging credit.

"This room'd be real pretty if it was opened

up a little." She removed, in anticipation, the fireboard that hid the big hearth from view. "Get a good fire burning there and loosen things up some, and it'll be nice," she reflected. The furniture that Abby Tilton had chosen did, indeed, seem fastened securely in its several places. The effect of the room was stiff and cold. The atmosphere of the whole house was forbidding. Eva recalled that she used to feel that Mary wanted to dust the chair she happened to be sitting in. Mary had never seemed to stop dusting. "Poor Mary didn't have time to make things pleasant," Eva thought resentfully. She felt that William had been a hard master.

William was very gentle all the evening. He seemed willing to defer to her wishes in many small ways. Eva glanced at him sharply once or twice. She had not looked for this. The next morning she and Lily got ready for the funeral. They baked pies and cakes, and boiled a big ham, and made raised



"This ain't a man's work," said Eva.

biscuits, so there would be a good lunch for the friends and relatives when they came from the grave. Mistress and maid were on easy terms, and Lily called a sharp protest when Eva was mixing a nut cake. Eva pressed her lips tight together, and deliberately threw in a few little pieces of shell; then she made a small cake of the part of the dough that had the shells in it. She remembered Mary's feverish anxiety at this very point the last time she had made a visit home. Mary had been so afraid that there might be a bit of shell in the cake, and had seemed so worried over the possibility that Eva had never forgotten.

"Let him bite on it," she muttered. "It'll do him good."

She was really so round and good and placid that her temper was a little ridiculous. Lily understood.

"He don't act mean," she said, answering Eva's unspoken accusation. "I think he's real nice. Maybe she was the worryin' kind."

Eva did not reply. She kept the little cake with the shells in it for their own supper and watched her brother-in-law narrowly when he bit full upon the trap prepared for him. He winced a little, with an immediate effort to conceal his pain. Then he spoke nervously of other matters, and it was quite clear to Eva that he did not wish her to know that he had found the shell. This puzzled her, and she was more puzzled as the days passed. William was not critical, but he appeared to be making a constant effort to avert trouble. One morning he came into the kitchen, and left prints of his muddy feet on the clean floor.

"Oh, I'm sorry!" he exclaimed in dismay. "I'll wipe it right up." He went to the corner where the mop was kept, and protested when Eva took it from him. "That ain't a man's work," said Eva. "Good land, William! I don't mind wiping up a bit after you."

He seemed relieved. "I'm awful sorry," he said again, but more cheerfully this time; and then, as Eva was quite evidently good-tempered, he ventured a first reference to his dead wife.

"Mary hated dirt like pizen," he remarked.

Eva opened the long-closed shutters. She brought down some pillows from the attic, and covered them with gay chintz. She sent to Milton for her own household goods, and put some green and blooming plants in the sunny windows. The house was changed slowly into quite another place. William looked around one day with a smile that seemed to her rather pathetic. "It's awful pleasant," he said mildly. Eva whipped herself to severity with the memory of her sister's worn, drooping figure, churning, sweeping, cleaning in unending round. William had sold some cows that fall, and he consulted her about the matter.

"I thought I wouldn't get any more just now," he said. She knew he saw the quick, sharp glance she shot at him. He was a big man and strong, but his manner was timid. "Does he think I'm going to bite?" Eva asked herself impatiently. "Unless you want them," continued William, with reference to the cows. She shook her head. She had firmly decided that she would not make butter for market, as Mary had done. She was not going to yield about that.

"I've always thought churning was awful hard work for a woman," said William unexpectedly. He looked worried. "But Mary would do it," he added. He seldom spoke of his wife. Eva found she had no need of firmness. She began to think a good deal of Mary, and to wonder. One day, when she was looking through some old trunks in the attic, she came upon a long, warm coat. It was a pretty, dark gray, and it was lined with gray fur, and had a soft, gray-fur collar. It had not been worn apparently, but was laid carefully away in tar and camphor to protect it from moths. She shook its folds, and brushed it with her fingers, and she wondered over it, and brought it downstairs at last to ask William about it. William knitted his brows.

"I bought it for Mary one time," he said, half ashamed. Eva was waiting, so he continued: "I'd been in New York



"Do you know, Eva, I've always wanted to have a party!"

on business, and I saw a lady with one kind of like it, and I thought maybe Mary'd like it. I went in a store, and told the clerk about it, and he showed me this one, and I brought it home. Mary was pretty mad." He hesitated. "Maybe it was extravagant," he admitted. "Mary never was one for dress, you know."

Eva's hand closed upon the gray fur, sinking into its softness. "I never thought you was one for dress," she said. William scratched his head slowly.

"Well," he explained, "I like to see womenfolks look nice, but we never went anywhere, except to church and to market, and Mary wouldn't have no company. She said it made too much work, and goodness knows she always found work enough! There didn't seem to be need to dress much. I kind of thought maybe she'd like this——"

A vision of Abby Tilton flashed

across Eva's mind. She wondered what William would have been like if he had not quarreled with his first sweetheart and married Mary Stevens in the first flush of his anger. She had watched narrowly, but had discovered no sign that William was conscious of Abby Tilton's existence. William was not at all the man she had looked to find. He was like a little boy as he stood before her.

"Do you suppose you could wear it?" he asked shyly.

She felt a wave of tenderness for him. He seemed to need comforting.

"Why, yes," she said. "I'd like to."

She slipped the coat over her arms. "It fits good," she said, twisting her neck to get a view of the shoulders.

"Yes, don't it?" William touched the gray fur with gentle fingers. "You look nice, Eva."

Eva opened the best room that day. She took out the board from the fire-

place, and laid kindling there. She brought in a big rocking-chair that had come from her home in Milton, and she set it near the hearth. She moved the sacred furniture to angles of greater ease, and after supper she led William in and showed him what she had done.

"Ain't it nice!" he cried. Eva's eyes filled with unexpected tears as she watched him. She told him to sit by the fire, but he would not until he had brought in another comfortable chair and placed it pleasantly for her. They rocked placidly and spoke of many things, little neighborhood gossip, and the past, and then of times to come. William was moved to confidence.

"Do you know," he began, and he looked around the room as if some one might hear him with reproof, "do you know, Eva, I've always wanted to have a party!"

"Well," said Eva, "by and by we will."

She leaned back in her chair, and looked into the fire. All the sweeping and dusting and scrubbing and churning, all the saving and the denying that had been Mary's life came back upon her memory. She looked at William with new interest, from a new point of view.

"Land, land," she said to herself; "what a life Mary did lead him!"

Truth

I BURN before the eyes of seers,
A splendor and a radiant dream;
Where men are mocked by doubts and fears,
My flame eternal reappears,
And ever through the barren years
They follow where I gleam.

I break the bones of ancient wrong;
And whensoever I pass them by
They leave the revel and the song
And kith and kin—a glittering throng
Who die by wheel and twisted thong,
That I may never die!

They die by cross and wayside tree;
Their blood is shed on crag and fen;
In vain the tempest on the sea,
Rack, fetter, scaffold, bar, and key,
For they who die for love of me
The same shall rise again!

My children come from every coast—
Apostle, prophet, sage, and bard;
The Nazarene who loved me most,
The Maid who led her bannered host,
And Galileo's valiant ghost—
Each hath his high reward.

No gifts are theirs of oil and corn,
Nor wine nor gold their meed shall be:
They toiled despised, obscure, forlorn;
But up the radiant slopes of morn
The world that held their deeds in scorn
Shall follow them—and Me.

VICTOR STARBUCK.



"What else can you expect, Eva?" she asked, with sisterly solicitude.

One of Edward's Jokes

By Ruth Kauffman

Author of "Servants of the Public," "The Second Manner of Arthur John Kirke," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA E. FOSTER

EVA GRAYE-MORLEY was volubly talking to her sister about it. She stood in her dressing room, opposite a long glass, arranging and rearranging puffs. She questioned the mirror as to whether they looked better high or low, and the answer remained, so far, in doubt.

"It makes me so ashamed," she said, twisting her head, and holding a hand glass aloft. "I believe Edward gets worse every day. He thinks he's funny, and plays coarse, practical jokes; that's the only idea of entertaining that he seems to have. But you'd think he could keep awake when people are here, especially when the Lawtons are here. Why, the Lawtons are the best family in Ayton!"

IO

Her sister, Mrs. Dobson, sat stiffly in a gilt chair. Her fat fingers had reached for a hairbrush, and, with the brush, she tapped the top of the dressing table.

"What else can you expect, Eva?" she asked, with sisterly solicitude, her childish, blue eyes full of comprehension. "I always warned you not to marry him. Now, Archibald——"

"I'm tired of Archibald," petulantly interrupted Eva. "How could I have dreamed of getting so far without any money? Nobody left *me* a fortune."

"It's horrid of you to call grand-mamma's few thousands a fortune. You always remind me of them when Edward is a little worse than usual."

Mrs. Dobson alternated the tapping

of the brush with the tapping of the extended toe of a fascinating pump. It was the toe that now beat in accompaniment to her words, and Mrs. Dobson held the vantage ground of her chair over her struggling sister.

"You had your choice," she continued, sighing from her deep bosom. "Archie says, whenever he hates me, that he might have been married to you. Poor dear! Of course, he doesn't really mean it. But Edward had such piles of money—after all, I suppose you couldn't be blamed. And Edward was generous, and thought he was in love with you, and this, that, and the other. It *was* a temptation."

Mrs. Graye-Morley turned irritably from her puffs.

"I wish you'd stop, Helen," she said.

"Still," went on the sister, moving from the quicksands, "I do admire your fortitude about the fish forks. He is awful about fish forks. Why, Eva, last night—"

"Don't tell me, dear! It's too dreadful. I *saw* him!"

"Can't you teach him better? He is still really fond of you, I believe."

"Fond of me? To be sure, he is. But, Helen, it seems no use. I try and try. Nobody knows what a life I lead. Every day I tell him, and he simply refuses to remember. Last week, before that dinner at the senator's, I spent two hours with him, actually spreading out the dishes, and knives, and forks on the card table, and making him repeat after me what each is for. I made him hold them right; his elbows are so pointed, and he can't seem to keep them at his sides. I thought at first that I'd accomplished something, but I hadn't. I nearly died when I heard him with his soup. Helen, I *could* hear him!"

Mrs. Dobson ran the palm of her hand over the English bristles.

"It must be his bringing up, Eva," she said. "I frankly don't believe there's any hope. I don't know. But they do say that you can't teach an old dog new tricks. Poor Edward! Sometimes I almost pity him. It can't be altogether his fault; his people were so frightfully common."

"If he'd only omit what he calls his wit, and if he wouldn't go to sleep! I don't know which is worse. He sleeps half the time when we're playing auction bridge, and makes his partner furious at his misplays. Helen, sometimes I'm happy enough to forget him for a moment, and then I look up to find that silly smile on his face, and his mouth ready to drop in a snore. It makes me sick!"

"Why don't you hide him?"

"You know what people would say if I went out alone. It's all right in a big city, but here in Ayton—I *have* to drag him along. It's"—tears filled Mrs. Graye-Morley's brown eyes—"it's making an old woman of me," she wailed.

"Don't, dear," soothed her sister. "There's nothing will make you old so soon as tears. You simply mustn't cry." Mrs. Dobson dipped her handkerchief in the mouth of one of the cologne bottles. "There, dear," she said, giving the handkerchief to her sister, "put this to your eyes. No, don't let any get in—it will sting. And a bit of powder. There! You're quite all right again."

"I must bear up, I know," said Eva, more calmly. "It's all very hard. If he were only refined. It's—it's polish he needs. He's as dusty and dull as—as a pebble in the road."

Twelve years ago, Eva, at twenty-five, had realized with a pang that she was not succeeding. She was poor, unmarried, and aspiring. Her sister, Helen, had inherited an indivisible fortune from a doting grandmother, and had forthwith married Archibald Dobson, a young society man, whose income sufficed to pay for his cigars and neckties. Eva had herself meant to marry Archibald, until both he and she found out, by the merest chance, that the other was not rich, whatever each had been led to conjecture. It was on account of his original attachment to Eva that Archie, in moments requiring relief, recalled this attachment to the actual Mrs. Dobson.

But twelve years ago such trivial considerations as attachments had not interested Eva Graye. A lucky circum-

stance had introduced to her Morley, and she had concluded that she could endure him. He had fallen in love with her—he had been helped to fall in love with her—and they had promptly married. At once he had been transformed into Edward Graye-Morley—he had sanctioned her even in this—and she into Mrs. Edward Graye-Morley. But at that moment of transformation, his “wit” had begun to display itself—he had tactlessly suggested that an “e” be added to the “Edward” and the “Morley,” as well as to the “Gray.”

In the trying moments of matrimony, any glamour that had brightened Edward disappeared. As Eva's husband, he did not seem to be a success. His faults were unpardonable and apparently incurable. Once Eva was even forced to tell him that she wished she were dead, and that she veritably believed that she'd commit suicide after one of his most objectionable faux pas; and Eva was not an hysterical woman, either.

Edward's sins were many. The most aggressive was his idea that “small talk” meant making puns or jests that had no point, and then laughing at what he said. When, on the other hand, some one was really funny, Edward would manage audibly to yawn or—worse—to stifle a snore. He hated collars, and stiff shirts, and dress clothes; and he never remembered what it was that Eva told him to do with the tails of his claw-hammer. Edward had a way of trying to sneak out of all engagements and into carpet slippers, and the old easy-chair in his den. He was tired when he got home from the office, he occasionally complained, and it was an effort to go out somewhere, and to have to think about his hands. He wanted to lounge, no matter how straight a chair he sat in, and he preferred solitaire to society, and chess to bridge. He sneezed at the top of his voice, and he always sneezed at the wrong time.

Moreover, he openly despised music in the form of the opera, and he objected to his rôle as escort on every occasion that Eva used the box.

“Why won't they act natural?” he would venture, while an index finger pulled at an offending collar. “Why won't they behave like Americans on Broadway, or at a good show? They're just a lot of fat Italians dressed up as if they were kids at a masquerade, and if you shut your eyes you can't get rid of them for the racket they make. They won't let you rest at all. I prefer moving pictures, or the subway, or Child's—”

So, plainly, Edward wouldn't do. No matter how often and how painstakingly his wife pointed out the narrow paths of etiquette, he would, when her arm was not on his, slink to the broad avenue of comfort, and stretch his long legs. Eva's point was that, however little man wants here below, he must at least consider other people; and Edward possessed the two low, impossible ambitions of wishing to live on a farm with chickens, and cows, and celery growing all around him, and wishing to be let alone.

“There you are!” Mrs. Graye-Morley repeated to her sister. “It's born and bred in him, Helen. His people are common—and so is he; and he likes it.” There was a kind of awe in her well-regulated tones. “He likes it, dear.”

To-morrow night, again, there was to be a dinner, an informal affair, with only a dozen people, but, for all that, a dinner of the utmost importance to Mrs. Graye-Morley. It was the first occasion when she had arranged to get the Lawtons to her house for anything so intimate, and all her future social advancement depended, she felt sure, upon the triumph of the dinner.

It was during the early morning following Mrs. Graye-Morley's interview with her sister that Mrs. Lawton called up Eva by the telephone. Edward was at the moment fretting over the difficulties of dressing for the office in the garments selected by his wife, and charged to his account at the department stores. He was glad for the relaxation of listening to Eva's high-pitched, honey-sweet answers across the wire.



The visitor pushed the curtain aside and saw, in the brilliant light of the hall, a slim, beautiful young woman in pale blue.

"Oh!" he heard his wife say in disappointment.

Then, "*Very ill?*" solicitously.

"But the dinner? What shall we do?" anxiously.

"A friend? A young lady, did you say?"

"Why, certainly, Mrs. Lawton. By all means bring her. You need hardly ask. I'm so sorry about Ethel, but, of course, we shall be delighted. Coming from the West, you say?"

"How funny! Mrs. Brown, you said? I was going to put your daughter with a Mr. Brown."

"No. I *don't* know him. Good family, though. Some friend of Edward's. You know how husbands are—they insist on their inviting their friends now and then. Edward thinks he's the most charming man he's ever met, quite

young and good looking; but, of course, I don't altogether trust Edward's observation." Soft laughter.

"She is a beauty? Lovely. But if her train isn't due till six, I don't see how she can dress and be here—"

"To be sure. Your maid is wonderful, I know. How well she manages with your hair—" Cattishly said, Edward thought.

"All right. Shall I change the order at the table? I *could*, you know."

"What did you say? Oh!" Laughter. "It *will* be funny. So you won't tell her—we're just to introduce them that way. Lovely! Good-by."

The day passed with the usual worries. Eva invariably took dinners seriously; and this was a serious dinner. There were so many details, and, to-night especially, everything must run smoothly and as if unplanned. The Lawtons were being "cultivated" with a vengeance, and Edward's wife dreaded mistakes. Now, if Edward would only behave! Mrs. Graye-

Morley set her lips in a line of persistent despair; little was to be done with him. When he got home from the office, she kissed him, and, with her arms about his neck, tragically warned him how much was at stake.

"You must help me, dear," she pleaded. "And if you start with the wrong fork, change it. Don't eat before the others start. Watch me, and you can't go wrong."

An awful fear entered Eva's mind.

"If you *have* to change forks," she said, "you won't let the Lawtons see you, will you, dear? And, whatever happens, remember what this dinner means to me."

Their conversation turned to Brown, Edward's friend.

"Oh, *he's* all right," cheerfully said Graye-Morley. "He's bully good fun, a

bit nervous, maybe, in the way he speaks, but the kind you'll like. Broad shoulders and straight, and wears good clothes, I suppose. *You* know. I can't remember the shape of his cuff buttons or the color of his shoes, but he'll suit. And, Eva," Edward spoke roguishly, "a man can't fall asleep when Brown's about. I asked him to come early, so I could start the dinner wide awake."

Edward's friend, William Brown, was the first guest to arrive, and Edward bore him off at once to the single room in the house that Edward called his very own—a kind of alcove, on the first floor, concealed by heavy draperies over its door from the rest of the ground-floor rooms, and yet commanding a view of the halls and a glimpse of most of the rooms. When undesirable callers appeared, Edward would, if possible, disappear into his "den," and then, should his wife seek him even there, slip out through the long French window into the garden.

William Brown was, as Edward had declared, the right sort. His manners were perfect, and his strong, lean face and upright bearing in no way against him. Edward interested himself by showing all the treasures of his wife-scorned hiding place to his guest; and Brown gave evidence of appreciating the stock of books and fishing tackle, the handsome, heavy shotgun for duck shooting, the dust-worn school flags, the few small, but good, pictures, the several racks of pipes, the antique desk, littered with sketches and letters, and the stuffed fox that Edward had himself killed.

The men were interrupted in their survey of this collection by the sound of the arriving guests. Edward nervously regarded the curtain and looked at his watch.

"Still twenty minutes," he breathed. "Let's make the most of them."

He started on further explanations, but Brown, the lines of his face grown tense, grasped his host's arm.

"Who—who is it?" he asked, pointing toward the hall.

"I don't know," said Edward. "I'll see."

He looked out.

"Only the Lawtons," he announced dryly. "My wife says they're the best people in town, you know."

"But—is that all? I knew about the Lawtons coming, but——"

"There's somebody with them." Edward's small, thin face peered through the curtain. "Say, she's a peach! Ought to take a look, old boy."

But Brown kept in the background. "Who is she?" he asked. "I can't see. I'm sure I heard her voice."

Edward wondered.

"Oh," he said. "She must be that Mrs.—— I don't believe I'm to tell you."

"Not to tell me? Why not? Tell me at once!"

Edward was perplexed.

"It's just a little plan of theirs. But really, it couldn't matter. Funny thing! Her name's Brown, too, you know."

"Brown?" The visitor pushed the curtain aside and saw, in the brilliant light of the hall, a slim, beautiful young woman in pale blue, her masses of golden hair low on her neck, her large eyes upon her hostess.

He pulled back, drawing the curtain.

"My wife!" he said.

"But, but——" stammered Edward.

"I've got to go," said Brown. "Quick. Show me some way!"

Edward extended a detaining hand.

"Wait a minute, old chap. Cool down and explain what you can. My wife will raise—I beg your pardon—she'll never forgive me if I let you go."

"I've got to go." Perspiration beaded the visitor's forehead. "Awfully sorry, but—can't you see?—we're getting a divorce."

"And Eva was going to have you take her out! It would be a bit rough," said Edward.

"Rough? My God! Why, we don't speak!"

Edward felt helpless. Then, resolutely—he had to think quickly—he shut the door.

"We must work this thing out," he said. "If you go, you've got to have a better excuse than a divorce. My wife



"I—I'm begging you two people for mercy."

told me that the happiness of her life depended on the success of this dinner—and, Heaven knows, so does mine! I can't tell her you've left her in the lurch and spoiled her life, just on account of a divorce. Think, man! Look at my position."

Drops of sweat were on Edward's forehead, too, now, and Edward's eyes moved back and forth from Brown to the French window, and then to the heavy shotgun. Edward was not thinking slowly.

It may have been the realization of Edward's predicament that made his visitor's face relax a little. But Brown's determination to go was still strong.

"What else could I do?" Brown asked, in despair. "I can't meet her."

"Didn't the Lawtons know?" asked Edward. "Why did they bring her? And this horrible idea of putting you two together! Haven't women any sense at all?"

"The Lawtons don't know me," said Brown. "None of them has met me yet. Their daughter knew Madge, my wife, at school; and I don't suppose Madge is telling about the trouble. She wouldn't at first. She's not that kind."

"But the newspapers?"

"Oh, they don't bother with us—we're nobody. Besides, I don't know whether the suit's been filed yet."

"How long has it been going on—this trouble?"

"Oh, a long time."

"She getting the divorce?"

"Yes. Mutual, of course; just mutual hatred. But it looks better for her to get it; not so much shame, and all that."

Edward paced the floor. His thin fingers worked at his collar.

"If you were only entirely divorced!" he said. "You're always friendly after you're entirely divorced, you know."

"The thing won't be over

for months," objected Brown.

"You couldn't pretend it was all over?"

"Heavens, no!"

"Well, couldn't you pretend you'd never met before, that this is chance?"

"And then sit together and not talk?"

"Nobody'd notice," said Edward; "and it's only for to-night."

Brown said nothing.

"Do it for me, old fellow," Edward pleaded. "It'd be an awfully big favor. You'll never know what a service it would be to me."

"She wouldn't stand for it. She hates me too much."

"Let me try it?"

Again there was silence, but the figure of Brown was not encouraging.

"You stay here," Edward said persuasively. "Just five minutes. Then, if it won't work, you can go, and I'll not say another word. I'll get introduced to her. Then I'll warn her on

the Q. T. Tell her you're just as sorry about it as she, and that it's no more your fault than hers. Promise you'll stay."

"No, no," said Brown, his face flushed. But his host's disappointment was so patent that he suddenly agreed. "All right," he said dully. "But make your five minutes short. I can't stand this thing much longer."

Edward plunged to the group of people. He hurried into an introduction to Mrs. Brown, and then turned his back on the medium of introduction. All he could attend to was Mrs. Brown. His eyes probed her clear, dark-blue ones. He was glad to find hers beautiful eyes, and a little troubled. He tried to make himself believe that they were tender eyes. He had meant only to whisper his word in her ear, but an impulse altered his first intention.

"Let me show you my den, Mrs. Brown," he said, in his jerky way, while he put her arm through his and drew her from the others so speedily that no objection could be made by the other guests. His wife's head, he observed with satisfaction, was turned, and he could hear her in a lively argument about servants.

Young Mrs. Brown looked at her host with curiosity.

"Why leave them?" she asked.

"Sh!"

He urged her on and nearly pushed her into his den. The abruptness of his action, and the different, lower lights kept her mystified for a space.

Then, "Billy!" she cried, and attempted to go.

Edward blocked the way.

"We're in an awful predicament, Mrs. Brown," he said. "This is all a horrible mistake. Nobody's fault in the world; simply bad chance. It's—it's the eleventh hour, and what can we do? Here my wife has invited you two to dinner—didn't know either of you till to-night; Brown's my friend, not hers—doesn't dream you ever saw each other, and—and she means you to sit together. You see, I'm telling you the worst."

Both of the Browns started to speak,

but Edward, his hands waving for silence, continued:

"Now this is the situation. I'm not supposed to tell. Indeed, my—Eva'll never forgive me if she finds out I've told, but this is the night of her life. She said so to me. She may be right; she may be wrong—if the dinner's a failure she declares her life's spoiled. So's mine, for she'll tell me about the failure every day henceforth." He pulled again at his collar. "I—I'm begging you two people for mercy. It's only one night for you, and it's my whole life."

He looked from one to the other. Brown, at least, was effectively quieted. He was very likely angry at Edward for bringing the young woman into the room, but he had the sense to keep still about it. Mrs. Brown, however, gasped out a few dissenting words; there was no doubting her wishes.

"Let me go," she nearly sobbed. "Oh, let me go!"

"No," said Edward grimly. "Not yet. I'm going to talk to you. I've got to."

Mr. Graye-Morley took out his watch. He did not dare to look at it for fear of losing his audience; he could only feel the pressure of time. Meanwhile his guests stood, their faces averted from each other.

"Again," said Edward, "I—I'm begging you two. I suppose I'm a kind of criminal, but lots of people have a sneaking sympathy for the man in the dock. *Won't* you listen?"

There they were. What, indeed, could they do but listen until an opportunity for exit presented itself? Brown bowed a semi-assent, more in resignation than from a desire to submit. His wife, whose blue eyes had grown larger between rage at what she feared was a trick, and amazement at the attitude of her hostess' husband, now fell, and Edward saw the eyelids flicker. He hoped that was a good sign. He did not know, of course, that to so young and inexperienced a woman he cut, by the very earnestness of his appeal, a ludicrous figure.

Nevertheless, he made his plea. He

leaned his thin back tightly against the door, and kept one hand upon the knob to defeat intrusion. His eyes blinked constantly, and searched the thoughts of his listeners.

"You don't know Eva very well, you two," he said softly; "but you've both met her. Now, she's a wonderful woman—got all kinds of social qualities, and all that—knows how to wear a jabot, or carry an ulster, or entertain King George, if she got a chance. You'd never suspect we had any differences, you know. You people would think her just about ideal, I guess. I did once."

Brown and his wife looked up.

"Yes, I honestly did. I said things to her that I've never said to another living being—all about the way I thought and felt when I was a youngster, and how she had smaller hands and feet than her sister, and—the 'other girl' I used to try to make her jealous with. She'd blush at half my remarks—awfully pretty, too, when she blushed. And I remember—I'd not for the world let her know I remember—the first time her hair got caught on my cheek, and the moonlight nights when the chaperons were a bit deaf. Finally we got married. She would tell me I was about the best thing in the world before the wedding, and as long as the honeymooning lasted she tried to keep that up. But she must have watched me too close—that's the only reason I can think of for the start of the trouble; she must have watched me too close."

Edward raised his watch toward his face. Again he did not dare look at it.

"Anyhow," he went on, "she began to see things. I—I don't want to bore you. I won't take any longer than I can help. But one of my big sins, she says, is I can't say a thing quick. Now, she's know how. I just don't."

There was no help opposite. There was only silence—a stolid wall of black and white, and a stately wall of pale blue and gold.

"She began to notice things," said Edward. "My elbows stuck out at table, and sometimes—it's awful to

admit it—I ate with my mouth open! I didn't care enough about other people; my very worst fault was I used to doze when her sister called, and her sister'd tell a funny story about Mrs. Somebody-or-other, and I'd forget to laugh. I think her sister maybe made fun of Eva for having such a husband. Anyhow, it got so bad that one day Eva told me she'd married me for my money.

"Of course, it wasn't true. We—we loved each other, you know. Why, we're the happiest two kids anywhere whenever I can get her away! We lived in a camp, just us two, for a week three years ago, and played—she and I played. I caught fishes and shot rabbits—and she did, too. And we cooked 'em, and laughed, and—all that."

Edward stopped. He seemed a little ashamed for having said so much. But the Browns, uninterested as they were in each other, appeared curious to hear what else he had to tell them.

"Yes?" prompted the woman.

"She didn't mind how I ate then," the host continued. "What she did care about was my wrapping her up cozy in my greatcoat one day when it rained, and the tent leaked. She nearly cried about me doing without my coat."

"And then we got back, and there were fish forks, and calls, and auction bridge again. She somehow forgot all the camp business—I guess it *was* silly. What my wife now wants most in the world is to be friends with some people or other. I'm an awful bother to her. I never do the right thing. She thinks I don't try—she says so once in a while—and there's no use in me saying a word. I've kind of given up explaining about my failings. But to-night I've brought you here, Brown, right to the house, and if she finds out you're the wrong man, it'll just be the end of everything. I'd like to prove to her I'm not so bad as she thinks, you know, and I'd hate this dinner to fail."

Edward cleared his throat. It was dry.

"I—I hope," he said, "that you aren't going to take this amiss. Maybe I've talked too much. But I'm trusting to



Mr. and Mrs. Brown were in each other's arms.

you not giving me away, even if you do decide you can't stick it out for the evening. Eva and I have bits of differences, but she's my wife, you know, and we've got to help each other out in everything."

Edward's straining ears caught the sounds of disturbance in the hall, of which Brown and his wife remained ignorant. The young woman, in constrained speech, without a glance at her to-be-divorced husband, nevertheless asked him:

"What had we better do?"

"I don't know," said Brown. "It's nobody's fault, but it's an awful mess."

"Well?"

Edward's soul was bent on the man and woman, his hearing on the hall outside. There was no reason for him to speak more; they must decide.

"Of course," said Brown politely, "I'll stand for whatever you think's the decent thing. I'd want to do the decent thing."

"I'd hate to spoil their dinner," vouchsafed Mrs. Brown. "But the Lawtons—they'd know."

Edward had hoped that the Lawtons had been told nothing.

"You told them?" asked Brown.

"Oh, not yet," admitted the girl.

"I've not had time. But I'll be sure to have to tell somebody soon; I can't bear all my unhappiness alone."

Edward had been trying to puzzle out the real situation between these two ever since he had brought them face to face. He had arrived at several conclusions. It was not only himself that he had had in mind in pleading with these two to go out to dinner.

"Well," Brown's voice was drearily saying, "what do you think of *me*, then? I've been alone in this town for four weeks, and never mentioned it to my best friend here."

The woman's eyes glistened at his admission.

"None of the Lawtons know *you*," she said. "Couldn't you be, say, a Mr. Wharton?"

"Mrs. Graye-Morley has met me," said Brown. "There's no time to change."

"She doesn't know you're related to me, does she?"

"No. But Graye-Morley and I've gone over the whole thing, and that wouldn't work. I don't know what to do. I might disappear through this French window."

Brown did not now, however, Edward's watchful eyes told him, precisely wish to disappear through the French window; and the girl did not wish him to.

"No, no," she objected. "That would look as if you were afraid."

"Um," agreed Brown.

"It would look as if—why, if any one found it out, it might be said you didn't like me!" She laughed a little.

"Um," said Brown again. "I suppose we ought to help each other out in things, oughtn't we?"

Edward heard the repetition of his own words with a sense of gratitude. He understood fully now, and his expression of anxiety altered.

"But, Billy," said Mrs. Brown, "they'll think things. If I were sure they wouldn't think things—"

"Listen." Edward felt it the moment to interrupt. "This is to be a one-night farce only, if you carry it out. Why not pretend I knew all along, and

that it is my little joke to bring you together in here—that Brown here told me his wife was coming East to-night to spend a vacation with the Lawtons, and that I put two and two together, you know, and arranged the matter myself?"

A light flashed into Brown's eyes. But Brown himself did not speak. It was his wife who put a question to Edward.

"How long," she asked, "have you and your wife been married?"

"Oh, forever," he said. "Eleven or twelve years now, I believe."

"And—did you two ever think of getting a divorce?" she inquired seriously.

"Well," parried Edward, "I understand there's always been one hanging around in the air out of regard for fish forks."

"You really began to have differences when you'd been married only—"

"One day," Edward admitted, without hesitation. "But we forget the differences now and then, you know."

"You—" pursued Mrs. Brown.

"You're still really fond of each other even after eleven years, aren't you?"

"We love each other," Edward said simply.

A glance passed between Brown and his wife.

"Do you suppose," said Brown solemnly to his wife, "that we could manage for this one evening?"

"We might try," said she.

Then several things happened. Perhaps the first was caused merely by Edward's remark about husband and wife helping each other out. At any rate, the two forgot the presence of a third person, and the habit of protection or dependence, or something of that sort, brought their hands together. And then, with Edward still there, they began the farce that they felt it the only decent thing to play for their host—they kissed each other.

The second occurrence was what Edward had known for several minutes to be inevitable. It was his wife's insistent voice. Eva demanded admittance, and must not be denied.

Mr. Graye-Morley relaxed his hold of the doorknob. His wife entered.

"Well!" she said, in a tone that she seldom used outside her dressing room, and then, as her eyes fell upon Mr. and Mrs. Brown. "Well," she weakly repeated.

Mr. and Mrs. Brown were in each other's arms.

"I didn't know——" began Eva, a little imperiously.

"That we're married?" laughed Brown. "It is a surprise, isn't it?"

The husband and wife drew apart, and the wife, at least, had the modesty to blush.

"I understand we're to sit together. It's very good of you, Mrs. Graye-Morley," said Mrs. Brown.

Brief and incomplete explanations followed. Some reference was made to business engagements on the part of Billy Brown, and loneliness on the part of his wife. Eva Graye-Morley commented little on the episode, but she felt that the affair was meant to be one of Edward's jokes. For herself, she did not consider the joke funny.

Nevertheless, Eva's smooth, cultured tones showed nothing but delight, and if she had misgivings of any kind, her dinner guests did not see them, nor could they pronounce her anything but a charming hostess.

And Mrs. Lawton parted from her hostess with an effusion that indicated her approval.

"You know," the social queen ran on, "I'd never met him, and I had no idea

she had such a delightful husband. Such a wonderful pair they are, too. Yes, they've been married only a short time; not yet a year, you know. It was a most romantic affair. I'll tell you all about it some time. Love match, of course. They worship each other."

"It's odd, isn't it," said Mrs. Graye-Morley a little suspiciously, "that nobody but Edward should have known beforehand?"

"Oh, isn't your husband wonderful!" said Mrs. Lawton. "So delicate of him! Preventing too demonstrative a surprise by arranging their meeting away from the crowd. And you'll write down that promise of yours at once in your engagement book, won't you, dear?"

An hour later Edward came into his wife's dressing room, and awkwardly approached Mrs. Graye-Morley, who was removing puffs and preparing her head for the night.

"Eva," he began.

She cut him short. In fact, she quite turned upon him.

"I don't know, Edward," she said sharply, "what under the sun you were trying to do. I suppose you thought it all a joke; but I wish you wouldn't play your pranks when it's time for the soup to be on the table. The cook was very proud of the soup—she'd gone to a lot of pains about it—and she had her choice between letting it burn and letting it get cold. It was tepid, Edward, tepid when it came on!"



Marine Millinery

COUNTRY newspapers are prize performers in printing things that make people laugh, but, when it comes to real mirth, the little sheets of seaport towns are the best.

Here is what one printed as a sailor's description of his bride:

"When we were spliced she was newly rigged fore and aft, with rigging of lace and flowers, mainsail part silk, with fore-staysail of valencienne. Her frame was of the best steel, laid over with silk, with whalebone stanchions. This rigging is intended for fair-weather cruising. She has also storm sails for rough weather, and is rigging out a small set of canvas for light squalls. In running down the street before the wind, she answers the helm beautifully."



The Honeymoon

By Edwin L. Sabin

Author of "Cleopatra at Peterkin," "Prexy's Niece," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY H. M. EUNKER

A LITTLE, old, and wrinkled woman stood upon the porch of a cottage that needed painting, and waited for a tall, old, and wrinkled man to traverse the path and to ascend the steps. He carried a dinner bucket. His work-begrimed clothing showed sawdust and shavings.

The time was evening. Beyond the house lay the town—a myriad roofs and chimneys—many of the latter plumed by lazy evening smoke—limned against the sunset pink. Amid the engirding roofs, the cottage, behind its rather decrepit fencing bursting with old-fashioned shrubbery, somehow breathed the atmosphere of an oasis in a desert.

The tall, old, and wrinkled man bent and kissed the little, old, and wrinkled woman, and together they entered the house.

"What is it? Where's Tom? Anything the matter?" He spoke with sudden anxiety.

"Don't be foolish, Solomon. Nothing's the matter—that is, nothing wrong. Tom came home and went again. He's over to the Rosecrofts', I reckon."

"He's going there a great deal—and before supper, now, at that!"

"Well, Sol—he's to marry Betty. I thought I'd meet you and tell you. He's there to ask her pa."

"Has he asked *her*? Hope so!"

"Of course. And she said yes. She's—all right, I guess, Sol."

The tall, old, and wrinkled man responded promptly to the quavering appeal:

"I don't know anything against the girl, Mary. Not a thing. But she's got a good boy in our Tom."

"Oh, no girl's good enough for Tom," asserted the little, old, and wrinkled woman.

"When did it happen? When did he ask her?"

"Last night. And he couldn't keep it. He had to tell me this morning, after you left. Said he had intended not to say anything to us until he'd asked Betty's folks. But he had to tell *somebody*, before he went to work. He was too happy, Sol; just bubbling over. Didn't you notice something ailed him at breakfast? He had that funny, grinny expression about his mouth, like he always has when he's trying to hold something in."

"No, I didn't notice. I was too busy figuring out that new contract."

"Oh, did you get it figured, Sol?"

"Half so. I'd counted on Tom's help. I'll need ready money. He'd lend me out of his savings. But now he'll want them himself. When did he say he'd like to be married?"

"June, if he could."

"Two months, eh? He's in a hurry. Well!"

"We mustn't stand in his way, Sol. Young folks are apt to be in a hurry. We were in a hurry, too, at their age."

"No, we won't stand in his way. Only I wish it might come a little later."

"I do suppose you need him, Sol. But he doesn't realize."

"If I could put this store building up, the way I'd figured, then you and I could have taken a little trip, Mary. I'd thought we might go up to the Lakes, for a while. We've always wanted to."

"Oh, well, Sol; we can wait. There'll be another time."

She had said this each year; and now, remembering, he could only respond, rather grimly:

"Yes. We've waited twenty years; we can wait a few more. If you and I ever do get out o' town, Mary, they'll put us in a circus menagerie."

"There, there!" she cautioned. "It's all right, far as I'm concerned. And here comes Tom. He's the one, now—and Betty."

When Tommy Jones fell in love with Betty Rosecroft the fact was not at all astonishing, except to Betty; and when Betty Rosecroft fell in love with Tommy Jones, the fact was astonishing only to Tom and his rivals. For Betty was as charming as a dewy rose, and as capable as her grandmother—which was to say considerable—and Tom was to be characterized as a "rising young man," industrious and honest. At the imminence of betrothal, the main topic of conversation in the village, as to the affair, was the effect upon the "old folks."

The Rosecroft family was well to do, and might be left to look out for itself; Mr. Rosecroft being a retired farmer, and independent. Naturally Betty would be much missed in the household. But "giving in marriage" was to be expected by parents who had a daughter, and in this case the separation would be one only of blocks, and not of miles. Contrary to the situation as customarily viewed, the loss was in the family of



A little, old, and wrinkled woman stood upon the porch, and waited for a tall, old, and wrinkled man.

the groom, and not of the bride, for when Tom Jones took a wife and set up an establishment of his own, old Mr. and Mrs. Jones would be deprived of a factor almost necessary in their daily life.

Mary and Solomon Jones had grown old together. Hand in hand they had trudged the long path of years, and each had labored in the edifice occupied by their joint life. Mr. Jones never had been more than a carpenter, and in a small way a contractor; he was a very reliable carpenter, and a very conscientious

tious contractor, but he had not got ahead. In fact, less scrupulous workmen not infrequently got ahead of him. It was well known that Tom, the son, with his steady job at his trade, was his father's mainstay, and, in a pinch, to carry a contract over an emergency, acted as his father's banker. But after a boy is married, and has a family of his own, he must look out for it, mustn't he? Of course. The general opinion was that old Mr. and Mrs. Jones would have hard sledding.

This effect, consequent upon his taking Betty, evidently did not impress Tom as much as did other phases: for a young man, with the sweetest girl in all the world arrived to share his life and make it new, is apt to think chiefly of just two personages—herself and himself. They fill his horizon.

Therefore, Tom was radiant. And he being their son, and they having been radiant themselves, in a day long gone by, a little, old, and wrinkled woman and a tall, old, and wrinkled man sedulously opposed him not.

"Well, Tom, your mother's told me," greeted his father, as Tom now leaped through the door. "You've found the right girl."

"The only one left, besides mother," declared Tom.

"They've told her you can have her, have they?"

"Just as nice about it as could be, dad."

"When's the day, then?"

"Well, I had in mind June fifteenth; that's the middle, you know. When I mentioned it, nobody raised any objection. So I guess we can count on it. The Rosecrofts believe in short engagements, same as I do. Does that suit you and ma?"

"Whatever suits you and Betty must suit us, my boy. There are two times when a person is king or queen—at his birth and at his wedding. You and Betty fix up the date, and your mother and I'll be on hand."

"If you aren't, there won't be any wedding," laughed Tom.

"Suppose you two have it all planned out now," remarked Mr. Jones quizzically

at the breakfast table the next morning.

"Why?" demanded Tom.

"So your mother and I figured, from your being over there last night till near midnight," explained his father, still quizzically. "June fifteen, is it?"

"Yes, sir, if there's no objection."

"None here, my boy. And what's the rest of the plan?"

"I was going to tell you. I've had my eye on that new house the Continental Construction Company is putting up, out on Maple Street. You know it. I can buy that, father, for three hundred down, and the remainder like rent."

"You and Betty can live right on with us, here, Tom, you understand," faltered his mother. "We wouldn't bother you. You could have upstairs to yourselves."

"I know it, mother. But we guess we'd better try a house of our own. That one will be done by July. So after the ceremony, Betty and I think we'll take a little trip out to the Yellowstone Park for a couple of weeks."

"How much will that cost, Tom?"

"About two hundred dollars, I reckon."

The mother and father exchanged glances.

"Tommy, I'll pay Betty's way on it, then," spoke his father. "I can let you have one hundred dollars, that is. It'll be from your mother, too."

"Won't take it, dad."

"Oh, yes, you will. We want to do a little something. We were talking about it last night, your mother and I, and we agreed. I can spare the hundred. It's our wedding gift to you. Some fathers give a check for a thousand or more, to the bridal couple. But you know how I'm fixed. If it were later in the summer, after I'd got that store-building contract off my hands —"

"But one hundred dollars, dad! That's too much. You make Betty something for the house—a chest, or set of drawers, when you have time; and mother can make her some doilies or a pillowcase. But you put that hun-

dred on your contract, or use it for you and mother."

"No; it's for you and Betty, Tom," interposed his mother.

And, realizing that she was as "set" in her intentions as his father, Tom accepted ere he had hurt their feelings.

He accepted without a full and open consciousness of all the elements that entered into the proffer; for the elements that now most appealed to him were the pride and the love in the giving, and the part that it played in the composition picture of Betty, and the new home, and the honeymoon, and the years of joy to follow.

With the unaffectedness that stamped the town's neighborly ways, the news of the engagement spread at once, so that within twenty-four hours Tom was receiving the congratulations due. They were the conventional congratulations, hearty and full of good wishes, but still the to-be-expected kind—until a query by old Doctor Robertson pricked him through his glowing self-satisfaction.

"Well, Tom, the young folks take a trip instead of the old folks this time, is it?" hazarded the doctor.

"Why?"

"Oh, I hear that you and Betty will be off to the Yellowstone for a honeymoon. Your father will have his hands full with that store contract. He took it awful low, Tom. I told him he was foolish. But he sort of counted on you to pull him through. The trouble was, he didn't count on Betty—eh?" And the old doctor laughed.

"He can count on us both," retorted Tom, stanchly but vaguely. "But am I cutting anybody out of any trip?"



"Well, Tom, your mother's told me."

"Now, I wouldn't say so," placated the old doctor. "I did hear your father say, some time back, that he thought he might take your ma and go up to the Lakes and catch a fish this summer. Hadn't been anywhere for twenty years or more, and thought it was time he had a vacation. But he was just talking, and so am I."

Talk or not, it all bothered Tom, and he carried it straight home.

"Father, were you and mother planning on a trip this summer?" he demanded of his father, aside.

"Why, Tom?"

"Just was curious about it. You can go, as well as not. Can't you?"

"Oh, we're always having a trip ahead of us, and never catching up with it," drawled his father. "Some day, when everything is right, we're going up to the Lakes, maybe, for a week. Now we'll see you and Betty settled first. We've got plenty of time."

"But you must go if you want to."



Old shoes had been thrown—for the town was not to be cheated of its full measure.

"Well, we'll see."

That was the most that he could extract from his father, so he went to his mother.

"Ma, how about that trip you and dad were planning this summer? Aren't you going?"

"We, Tom?"

"Yes, you."

"What did you hear about any trip, I'd like to know?"

"Now, mother!" he warned. "'Fess up."

"But, Tom, you know your father couldn't get me away from this house and yard in summer. Who'd tend to

the flowers, and keep the flies out the sitting room? I'm happy right here at home, where I belong."

"But weren't you and he going up to the Lakes? Betty and I'll come over and tend to the house and yard."

"We might have been talking, back and forth," she deprecated. "But he couldn't go, and I wouldn't go, so don't you worry. It'll be a trip to hear you tell about the Yellowstone when you get back."

"You never saw the Yellowstone; or father, either, did he?"

"No, and don't expect to. That's for the young generation."

"Ma, where did you and dad go on your honeymoon when you were married?"

"We? Down the road a quarter of a mile, where your father tried to be a farmer. His father gave him a twenty-acre patch, near the old homestead. But after we'd been married a couple of years, we went to Boston and back; and on our way out here we stopped at Saratoga for a day."

"That was thirty-five years ago."

"Thirty-three."

"I don't believe you've been out of town since."

"Yes, we have. Went to the World's Fair at Chicago," reminded his mother triumphantly. "But we aren't either of us much at traveling, Tom. Your father's busy, and I've got my house and yard—and I've had *you*. I reckon after this store-building contract is finished out in good shape, your pa and I might go up to the Lakes. He says he's entitled to a vacation, and he wants to catch a fish. But I don't know. We're well off at home."

"I guess he rather counted on me to help him out with that contract, didn't he?"

"Has he said so?"

"N-no. But I fancied. He took it pretty low."

"Don't you worry about him. Your father's always been honest, and his name's good. He can get money if he needs it real bad. You put your attention on Betty."

"Well, I won't take that hundred," again declared Tom.

"Yes, you will," returned his mother. "We want to do *something*."

Much as Tom loved Betty, and well as he deemed that he knew her, nevertheless, this night he approached her with doubt in his heart. But the first test, as when a jeweler drills into a ring, demonstrated that she was pure gold.

A week passed, for, as Tom had said: "We'll let the thing simmer down, Bet. If mother once gets 'set,' or if we step on her pride, you or I could talk all day and not budge

her an iota. And dad's the same." Then, seizing upon what seemed the psychological moment, Tom broached the new proposition. The moment was ushered in by a question, on the front porch, as he sat there presumably playing for time ere paying his nightly visit to the Rosecroft home.

"Have you looked up those Yellowstone rates yet, Tom?" had asked his father.

"We've about decided not to go. I was just ready to mention it. We've got another scheme."

"Not going, Tom? I declare!" exclaimed his mother. "What's the matter?"

"Well, we've come to the conclusion that a honeymoon trip so close on the wedding is about the hardest work in the world. We'd rather stay at home and be quiet for a spell."

"But your new house won't be ready.



The round moon disc on d another couple, a younger couple, left to themselves.

I doubt if it's ready by the middle of July. I was looking in on it to-day," said his father.

"Then why can't we come right here after the wedding, and stay a while?" demanded Tom.

"You can, my boy," cooed his mother instantly. "Of course you can. Didn't we say so from the very first?"

"And you and dad go," blurted Tom anxiously. It was out, at last.

"What do you mean? We won't bother you."

"I mean—and Betty means it, too, because we've talked it all out—that she and I stay here, and you and mother go to the Yellowstone. We'll swap off. It's time you two had your honeymoon trip—and it's long enough after the ceremony so that you've got settled down and rested. We aren't ready for *our* honeymoon trip. Don't want it yet. You take that hundred, and I'll throw in a hundred of my two hundred, and you go—and Betty and I'll have a beautiful time right here by ourselves."

"But, Tom——" expostulated his mother, bewildered.

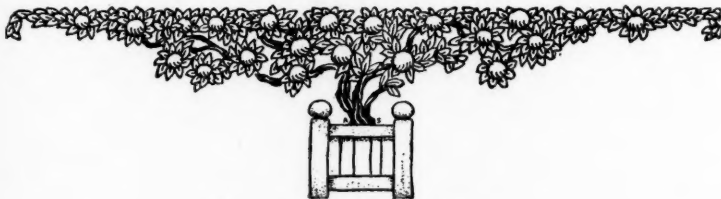
"Not much——" attempted his father.

"You will. Mother, Betty'll look after the flowers and the flies. Father, I'll look after that contract, and see that you aren't cheated, and that the workmen don't put in worse lumber than you ordered. And I'll be a hundred dollars ahead. I don't know as we want that new house, anyway. Don't exactly like the arrangement, and don't like to tie

my money up so far in advance. But you go, you two, and we'll take our honeymoon trip next year, after we're used to things. We'd rather, and here comes Betty herself to say so."

The ceremony was over, the concluding words of the minister had been spoken; the throng of well-wishers had crowded into the old-fashioned parlor, and had kissed the bride, and some had kissed the groom; but all this confusion was several hours back. A carriage had indeed met the incoming west-bound train, old shoes had been thrown—for the town was not to be cheated of its full measure—but, to the passengers aboard, the couple that entered the Pullman were singularly along in years for a bridal pair.

Now, westward whirled, a little, old, and wrinkled woman and a tall, old, and wrinkled man, side by side in the seat in the Pullman, whispered in low tone, or, with hands that trembled somewhat, fingered bonnet, tie, and suit case. Outside was the round moon, a lovers' moon, enveloping the Yellowstone, before, and the weather-beaten cottage and rose-embowered porch, behind; glorifying it, disclosing another couple, a younger couple, left to themselves and to the marvels, fairer than any Yellowstone, ahead of them. Peace infolded them, as they stood; then, arm around waist, in happy content they paced within, and the wonted walls received them with a soft-breathed benediction.



Plenty of Experience

MRS. ELLA FLAGG YOUNG, one of the best-known authorities on education in this country, has been engaged in teaching since 1862. In addition to this long work in the schools, there is no woman in the United States more busy than she is with women's clubs and with writing books.

A FULL LINE OF SPINSTERS



ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

A DULL, red glow—a very distant red glow—painted the northern heavens close to the horizon.

"Cap'n" Aaron Sproul observed the glow, for he had stepped out upon the piazza at nine o'clock that evening to take a squint at a particularly low thermometer.

It was a winter night as hard as crystal. The clapboard nails snapped, the frost bells tinkled, and the floor of the porch creaked under his tread. The biting air nipped his nose, and the frost set its little teeth into his slipped heels.

"If that's a stand of buildings, I'm sorry for the owners, whoever they be," he remarked.

That the ominous glow in the north contained a hint that he ought to be sorry for himself was far from occurring to Cap'n Aaron Sproul. He hurried into the house, slammed the door, and shut out winter's cold, warmed his feet before the open grate, and went to bed with deep sense of content. That dull, red glow in the north might mean trouble for some one; he was thankful it was not his own trouble. In the morning he came to a sudden and realizing sense that his thankfulness on that point had been premature.

While "sooping" the first mouthfuls of his breakfast coffee, he heard the jangle of bells in the yard, and the yawling of runners on the hard snow.

He did not realize at first—but—there Trouble was!

Solemn bells, jangling from the breastplates of plodding horses, mournful yells of iron shoes dragging over crisp snow—the sounds signaled the advance of trouble—and Cap'n Sproul kept his sitting at his peaceful breakfast table, the warm sun comforting his broad back, and was more interested in his bacon and eggs than in those sounds in the yard.

For one more instant, peace in his home, blissful content alone with his wife, Louada Murilla, the kettle singing on the stove, the cat purring on the hearth!

The next instant, bang—bang! on the outside door, the door was thrown noisily open, and in came persons without ceremony.

Three women led, in single file. The three Fates, hooded, could not have appeared more ominous. The women were tall and gaunt, and were swathed in blankets and cowed with shawls. A red-faced man, his whiskers iced to his eyes, tramped behind them. In his arms he bore a basket which was filled with dishes, and frying pans, and other articles of kitchen use. Two men came staggering at the end of the procession, tugging in a parlor organ. The icy breath of a winter morning swept into the cozy sitting room, chilling the cap'n's legs while the spectacle of this irruption chilled his soul. The cat ceased to purr, and fled. The kettle stopped singing, and the bacon and eggs grew cold on the plate. The cap'n laid

down his knife and fork and stared at the women, at the icicled man, and at the parlor organ, which bumped him as the staggering men lugged it past the table.

Never did a peaceful interior seem more upheaved in an instant's space.

"Saints above and lord of love!" gasped Louada Murilla.

"We've just about made up our minds there ain't any such," declared the foremost woman hollowly. "When things can happen to three lone, unprotected, maiden ladies, three sisters who never done anything to hurt anybody in this world—I say, when things can happen as happened to us last night, it takes a lot of faith not to believe that the devil ain't running everything in this world."

"These are the Poffitt girls—my cousins, Aaron," announced his wife excitedly. "For mercy's sakes, what has happened?"

"We've been burned out—lock, stock, stitch, and tuck, that's what has happened. Nothing but a sullen hole and two chimbleys to show where the home of three lone, unprotected women stood yesterday. Not a stick or stivver saved except them few cooking tools and our precious organ! They've brought us here on a hoss sled, Cousin Lou. Some people slur their relatives. I'm glad I have never done so. I'm thanking my lucky stars that I've got one cousin in the world."

"Nothing like having relatives who are able and willing to take in them in suffering and distress," stated the red-faced man cheerily. He had managed to break enough icicles off his beard so that he could open his mouth. "When things got torched up, and I see that the Poffitt sisters was spoke for, so far as their house went, I says to the rest of the neighbors that there ain't any need for them to despair. There's the Cousins Sproul, I says, ready, able, and just hankering to take in all them in trouble and distress—living by themselves in a nice big house, and prob'ly lonesome and suffering for company this long and dreary winter. There's nothing like lone and unprotected fe-

males getting into a place in the winter where there's a man to take things off their shoulders."

The first tall, gaunt woman pulled the shawl off her head. Her sisters followed suit. They stood in a row, and surveyed the blinking cap'n with melancholy trustfulness.

"It's a sad hour, Cousin Aaron Sproul, when three lonely and unprotected women lose their all by the fire fiend," the spokeswoman informed him; "but, on the other hand, it's comforting to realize that a strong man stands ready and willing to take up their burdens. Them burdens have been getting heavy for us to bear, living alone and unprotected."

Cap'n Sproul grunted something inarticulate. He sniffed real trouble now. That everlasting dwelling upon the "lonely and unprotected" state, that air of spineless surrender to circumstances, that mournful flopping upon the bosom of his family, made him feel that he was becoming mired in the situation.

The red-faced man divested his beard of a few more icicles and tossed the fragments on the stove, where they hissed merrily.

"I says to the neighbors and to the Old Maids Poffitt, here, that some men need the speech of the people to drive 'em into doing what's right by their relatives. But, says I, that ain't the way with Cap'n Sproul, of Scotaze. His hand is out and his door is open to lone and unprotected females. I've brought 'em right home to you, where they belong, and I hope the family will live happy ever after. It can't ever be sneered, says I, that Cap'n Sproul didn't do his full duty in a time of distress. The story that I take away from this house is that they was received with open arms, and their burdens has been took up by one who is able and willing. Give me a mug of that coffee and a couple of doughnuts, and I'll be on my way back."

He and his helpers sidled up to the table, and began to devour the cap'n's breakfast.

"I shall never dare to live in a house

again with just us three lone women there, cousin," confided another gaunt sister. "A house needs a man in it, and ours wouldn't have been burned down if there'd been a man on hand. The kitchen chimbley got full of sut—there being no man to sweep it down—and the sut took fire and cracked the bricks, and we couldn't do a thing but see it burn."

Still the cap'n and his wife seemed to be unable to frame language to suit the case. They stared at each other, and at the clutter the strange men had brought into the room.

"There's nothing like an understanding at the start-off between relatives who want to live happy together," stated the gaunt woman who had done the most of the talking. "The three of us have got settled ways, and they are ways that are going to make us comfortable to have in a family. We ain't going to be the burdens that some folks would be. Now that we've been taken in so kindly, we want to explain how we have always lived, and you'll understand that we ain't going to be any more trouble here than so many spirits of the dear departed. Each one of us has her own frying pan and dishes, and does her own cooking separate. We shall do that same here—each one for herself, and all satisfied. That's the way we've always done—that's the way we'll continue to do. We shall buy from the pantry here just as if it was a store, for we have got insurance money coming to us. Like generous relatives, feel-

ing sorry for the homeless and lone and unprotected, you'll probably insist on furnishing free to us the roof above our heads—a room for each—and we'll do all our own chamber work. No, cousins, we haven't come here to be burdens!"

"Well said—and there prob'ly won't be no fancy prices charged in the but-try here," declared the red-faced man, giving Cap'n Sproul a slap on the shoulder and an understanding wink. He departed, he and his men munching doughnuts.

The three gaunt women promptly got down on their knees beside their basket of chattels, and began to paw among the dishes.

"We're going to start in here the way we intend to hold out," protested they,



They screamed rather than sang.

in reply to Louada Murilla's faltering appeals that they "sit up to the table and have a bite to eat."

They rose after a division of their property. They marched into the kitchen in single file and arranged their dishes. They took possession with calm assurance that they were right, and that they had demanded only the prerogatives of "lone and unprotected women."

One ordered two eggs and two slices of "riz" bread" from the unresisting Louada Murilla. This one also took a spoonful and a half of coffee. Another took one egg and two slices of bacon and a pinch of tea. The third, having marked some cold boiled potatoes on the pantry shelf, took those and some cold corned beef; she prepared to fry some hash, and ordered a glass of milk from the general stock.

The three insisted doggedly until Mrs. Sproul secured an account book from the cap'n's desk and started a system of bookkeeping with the following parties: Tryphena Poffitt, Tryphosa Poffitt, Lubelle Poffitt.

Cap'n Sproul, sitting at a breakfast table which had been denuded by those up-country locusts of neighbors, grimly surveyed this scene of commercial and housekeeping activity. The three gaunt women monopolized the stove, and marched into the sitting room and monopolized the breakfast table. Then they monopolized the kitchen sink until their dishes had been washed.

It was all busy and bustling, but the cap'n failed to be enlivened by the activity. The gaunt women, absorbed by the recital of their own troubles, did not seem to notice Cap'n Sproul's statuesque speechlessness. At last they trailed upstairs in the wake of the flustered Louada Murilla. As weary, lone, and unprotected females who had put in a night of vigil and sorrow, they desired to tuck themselves away in their own rooms for a time.

Cap'n Sproul waited for his wife to speak when she had returned to the sitting room and had fallen limply into a chair. She stared appealingly at his mask of a face.

"For mercy sakes, say something, Aaron!" she pleaded. "Having you sit there all morning, while this has been going on, never a word out of you, is worse than all the rest that has happened. Tell me something to do!"

"Seeing that neighbors, inquiring friends, cousins, and other relatives have all been fed, and have eaten up my breakfast, and seeing that there ain't any mass meeting around that stove just now, I'll tell you what to do—you get me and the cat something to eat. Seeing, also, that you've started a store here for relatives, charge same to me on the book."

"But, Aaron, what else could I do different from what I've done? They're lone women, they have been burned out, there's the speech of people if I didn't take in my own cousins in their distress. It's hard enough for me as it is without your blaming me."

"Louada Murilla," he returned earnestly, jabbing his thumb significantly at the ceiling, "I'd no more blame you for them things up there than I'd blame you if the measles, the whooping-cough, and the smallpox came along and caught me all at once. All I'd ask is that *you* wouldn't turn around and blame *me* for feeling sick. I never felt so sick in all my life!"

She began to sob. He went across to her and patted her shoulder.

"Up to now I haven't been of any particular help to you, poor little woman, in handling ship in this squall; but it came so almighty sudden that I couldn't seem to lay hand to a rope. I ain't much use even yet, but I'll turn to and help all I can. It's worse for you than it is for me—they cusses underfoot in the kitchen and around this house!"

"No, it's worse for you, Aaron. It spoils your comfort."

But he insisted generously that she was entitled to the most sympathy, for he understood with what fervor a woman clings to autocracy in her own domain. He wished to console and encourage her.

"They may be cousins of yours, and lone and unprotected, as they say, and

speech of the people may be operating, at present writing, to keep 'em plastered onto us. But let me tell you that them critters haven't got enough glue in their dispositions to stay stuck on this happy home after I get over this shock so that I can do some hefty thinking."

He scowled at the organ in the middle of the floor, and at the three collections of dishes in the kitchen.

"I have seen some quick changes in affairs in my life," he affirmed, squaring his elbows to attack the new breakfast she brought to him. "But when a happy and peaceful home gets changed over in an hour and a half into a combination of old maids' asylum, grocery store, and provision market, boarding house, and quick-lunch counter, it's what you might call setting up a new record for clipper sailing in family affairs. Seeing that she is traveling so fast, I'll keep my hand on the helm."

He refused stoutly to avail himself of Louada Murilla's offer to take the cousin pestilence on herself—allowing him to spend his spare time in the village with his cronies.

"If ever you needed help you need it now," he informed her. "I'll stick close to the job."

The cousins filed downstairs at a seasonable hour in the forenoon, and announced that they were much refreshed, were more reconciled to their sad loss, and were hungry.

"Really, Cousin Aaron Sproul," said Tryphena, the one who had done most of the talking since their arrival, "considering the circumstances, and that we have been lone and unprotected for so many years, that fire may have been a blessing in disguise. 'God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform,' as the poet says. Women need a man at the head of a house. It isn't woman's sphere to shovel snow, do chores, and be at the mercy of every man who wants to cheat her in a trade. When we think it all over, it's more economical for us to live here with you, as we're living now—and we three have the blessed consolation of knowing that we haven't come here to be a burden on

your pocketbook or on Cousin Lou's strength. A happy family, with many hands to help ourselves, is what we'll all be. We'll put our insurance money into your hands and draw interest on it from you."

"I don't need to borrow money, marm."

"We don't mean to have you borrow it. We mean to have you as our bank. We know that, being right in the family, you'll be willing to pay a good deal more interest to us than a bank would, for you know we are lone and unprotected women who need all the income they can get so as to pay you for what we eat."

"You could pay us enough interest so that it would feed us and clothe us, and then we wouldn't have to worry any more in this life," suggested Tryphosa.

"Making one hand wash the other, so far as we are concerned," chimed in Lubelle.

"I'm afraid the bills for soap would run pretty high for *me*, call'ating the thing on that basis," was the cap'n's cryptic rejoinder.

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean by that remark, but if it's objecting to take the noble, large sum of five hundred dollars to handle for profit for yourself, as well as us, you ain't the kind of a cousin and protecting relative I took you for!" snapped Tryphena. "But I don't believe you would be so narrow, when we have shown such liberality as we have just talked about. The speech of the people has to be considered by a man in your position."

She whirled away, and ordered from Louada Murilla a slice of corned beef and an assortment of vegetables for a boiled dinner. The others, after careful inquiries as to the resources of the larder, made requisitions to suit their tastes, and proceeded to gather around the stove. Their little messes covered its top and its oven, and Louada Murilla vainly endeavored to get near the fire with her own dinner. And all the time the cousins were expressing praise of their own habits in housekeeping—habits, so they declared, that had enabled them to live together all the years



Miss Lubelle Poffitt was half way from the door to his pew, and she was crawling on her hands and knees.

without burdening each other with tasks.

"I reckon what I ought to do," vouchsafed the cap'n to his wife, under the clatter and chatter of the cousins, "is to rise high and light on 'em now and here. They have come in and run my own house just as long as I propose to have 'em."

But she restrained him with words and with patting hands.

"You've got to look at both sides of it, Aaron," she pleaded. "What is there to be done right now, until you have thought up a good plan, except to turn them out into winter's storm and snow? Let's be easy. Let's be careful. Let's go at it slow, and save the speech of the people."

"I had a porous plaster on my back once," related her husband. "First mate's idee was to work it off slow and by degrees—and he was skinning me, lingering-torture style, half an inch at a time; and then the second mate came along and grabbed the corner of that plaster, and yanked it off. It hurt, but it was quick over. That's my idee in this case here."

However, though he glared at the busy three in the kitchen, and growled under his breath, and threatened imme-

diate action, he knew in the depths of his soul that the summary expulsion of those three lone cousins of his wife in the dead of a New England winter would give him a reputation in Scotaze that would outclass Herod's. So he sat himself down to devise ways and means.

That evening he was smoking his pipe before the open fire, and was still devising ways and means.

The three gaunt women, having finished their individual suppers and washed their individual dishes, came into the sitting room, licking their lips with the content of old cats who have been fed.

"Following of the sea, as you did it, Cousin Aaron Sproul, must have been an inspiring kind of a life," remarked Tryphena.

Cap'n Sproul bent baleful gaze on her from the corners of his eyes without turning his head.

"I suppose you hanker for the sea, the deep blue sea at times," suggested Tryphosa.

The cap'n rolled his eyes to the other side, and surveyed this speaker.

"We have never seen the ocean, but all the poets tell us how grand it is—'Roll on, thou deep and dark-blue ocean,

roll,' and so forth," supplemented Lubelle. "I suppose you sit here and look at the fire, and wish you were even now in some southern clime, under sunny skies, Cousin Sproul."

"Yes, marm," assented the cap'n heartily, "seeing that to be under sunny skies of summer would mean being at the other end of the world from this place here."

"Oh, once a rover, always a rover," cried Tryphena, blandly oblivious to his sarcasm. The three beamed on him. Then they exchanged nods and meaning glances with each other. Tryphena, as usual, served as spokeswoman:

"But you can't go to the sea to-night, in winter's snow and bluster, Cousin Sproul—you can't go there in person. So we are going to bring the sea to you in song. We have always loved songs of the sea."

She hurried across to the salvaged organ, and looked over her shoulder at him as it began to moan wheezily.

"Organ music always seems to go lovely with sea songs. It sounds like the moan of the sad sea waves. Our favor-ite song, Cousin Aaron Sproul, is, 'Oh, ho! We're aloft in the raging gale.' All ready, sisters!"

They screamed rather than sang. They seemed to be trying to yell down that raging gale. And when they announced, in crescendo, at the end of the chorus, that they were aloft in the gale aforesaid, Cap'n Sproul dashed a comparatively new clay pipe into the fire and snarled under his breath: "D——n your jeeroosly pelts, if you only were, I'd chop down the mast and drop you overboard, even if I were trying toATCH off'm a lee shore!"

He glared at them with frozen features when they had finished. Perhaps they mistook his expression for rapt enjoyment. For they sang again, this time: "Say-hav-hay! Sail-ling, over the o-shun blue!"

He realized that there was no corner on the premises to which that distressful caterwauling would not penetrate, and so he remained beside the fire and endured the concert.

"We have many sea songs," he was

informed by Tryphena, as she led the procession of gaunt sisters from the room on their way to bed. "It makes a delightful way of passing the evening, and seeing that you hanker for the sea—the beautiful sea—we shall be only too glad to cheer you up every night after supper."

"I don't think you'd better get me into conversation about this matter," the cap'n advised his wife when they were alone together. "If I get to talking, the way my nerves have been left after that singing, I shall howl and run around this room on my hands and knees, and bite the furniture. I've got to go to bed. I've got to get to sleep as soon as I can."

That was Saturday evening. Cap'n Aaron Sproul had never been keen about accompanying Louada Murilla to church in the village. Usually he spent Sunday forenoons enjoying the "comfort of being alone," as he put it. To his wife's astonishment, he was the first one ready for meeting the next morning.

"I reckon I need the comforts of religion to tide me over until this thing gets straightened out," he informed her. "I've got to get somewhere out of this house. Church seems to be the best place. I hope it's going to help me. My night's sleep didn't do me a mite of good."

He undoubtedly indulged the lingering hope that the gaunt sisters had not saved a wardrobe that would enable them to appear at church.

However, as the cap'n and his wife were starting off, Tryphena and Tryphosa appeared from their sanctuaries upstairs, presenting a church-going appearance.

"We saved more from the wrack and ruin than we thought we had," explained Tryphena. "We brought it tucked under our arms. Folks get excited at a fire, and do things they don't know they are doing. Now we find that we got out most of our best clothes, and had 'em tucked under our arms. We'll go right along with you. We don't like to miss meeting. Lubelle says not to wait for her. She may

come and she may not. She didn't have as good luck with her clothes as we did."

Cap'n Sproul, a scowl on his face, marched down the winter highway to the meetinghouse, ushered his augmented family into the pew, and composed himself at the aisle end as best he could. The sour thought came to him that the presence of the Poffitt sisters under his wing at church advertised the fact that they had been taken into his family. The problem of getting rid of them had been complicated. He noted that his friends and neighbors seemed to be much interested in the strangers.

But all of a sudden he remarked that they were more interested—much more interested in something else. This was during the long prayer. The interest of those friends and neighbors was breaking the absolute hush that had been prevailing. Cap'n Sproul's pew, as befitting a man of prominence in the community, was well up front. That interest in something else beside the prayer began to be expressed behind him. There were whispers and vague murmurings. There were childish snickers, and there were sounds that indicated adult amusement of a most pronounced character.

Cap'n Sproul, having will power and self-control, did not turn around. He stared up at the parson and frowned, to hint to that reverend gentleman that he distinctly disapproved of hilarity during the long prayer.

The minister had opened his eyes. He tried to keep on praying, but his voice broke and faltered. His features expressed alarm—yes, consternation. Then he stopped praying, and stared down the aisle with goggling eyes. Somebody behind the cap'n yelped a loud guffaw and choked.

Then Cap'n Sproul's self-control slipped its leash; he turned his head and looked down the aisle, too.

Miss Lubelle Poffitt was halfway from the door to his pew, and she was crawling on her hands and knees. She nodded reassuringly at him when she met his gaze, and crawled on at a

swifter pace. He twisted his knees aside to allow her to enter the pew, and she came in and sat down beside him. He glowered at her profile in mingled shame and rage. She sat there, demure, perfectly cool, and betraying no self-consciousness.

All around them there was bustle, there was rustle, and a queer buzz of comment filled the meetinghouse. Under shelter of this sound, he leaned over and hissed at her:

"What in the devil do you mean, coming into meeting like a cat sleuthing chickens, disgracing me and making yourself a laughingstock?"

"I didn't want to attract any attention," she whispered.

Cap'n Sproul realized in season to control himself that he was in no fit state to reply to that amazing reason without creating a riot.

"When a woman finds that she hasn't got proper meeting clothes, and is late, and the minister is praying, I believe in her making herself just as small and inconspicuous as she can," insisted Lubelle, smoothing her skirts. "That's my nature and them is my principles. And I don't want to be criticized for doing what it is my nature to do."

Cap'n Sproul caught the horrified and reproving stare which the minister divided between himself and his pew-mate. He sagged down in limp confusion, and the service went on. But the brick red which had crawled up the skin of the cap'n's neck from under his collar remained there; he knew that the eyes of the congregation were on him as marshal of that assortment of females in his pew.

The moment the last word of the benediction fell from the pastor's lips, Cap'n Sproul was on his way down the aisle to the door. He left his wife and her cousins to shift for themselves. He drove past grinning friends who sought to retard his departure. He had no desire to discuss the triumphal entry of Miss Lubelle Poffitt into Scotaze church and social circles. He fairly bumped Uncle Rufus Jordan off the church steps when that aged humorist suggested that Miss Poffitt would have

"come under the wire in handsomer style if her head had been checked higher."

The cap'n reached home ahead of his family. When the women arrived, he was sitting in his armchair as stiffly as an Egyptian statue, and with face as hard.

"You ought to rename that one of you," he declared, pointing his finger at Lubelle. "You haven't used up all the Trys there are. Call her Try-harder. Did she come back down that aisle turning handsprings? I didn't wait to see."

meeting. I've got something to say right now."

"Don't you forget that we are cousins of your wife, and are lone and unprotected, and ain't got any home to flee to, and that your bounden and Christian duty is to give us a roof over our heads, or else be shamed and disgraced in this town," warned the doughty Tryphena.

"There's nothing the matter with my memory, marm. If there was, to start with, you've tinkered it up since you've been here. I'm going to make what I say short and to the point. I never



"My best judgment is that you all three need to get married."

"Slurring a lone and unprotected woman is pretty mean business," declared Tryphena, bridling. "Our dear sister did just as her best judgment told her to do. Anybody who is shy and modest has a perfect right to show that she is so."

"You set down—the three of you!" commanded the cap'n. He pointed to chairs. His tone was imperious, and they obeyed.

"You three have come into my house, and have done most of the talking and most of the managing of the business since you have arrived. You have started a boarding house here, a grocery store, a restaurant, a concert hall, and have wound up with a circus in

took advantage of anybody's misfortunes yet, and I never shall. But I'm going to exercise my privilege of making comments on my own home, and remark that I'd rather live in the b'iler room of hell than in this house if you're going to stay here any longer."

"I refuse to listen to such horrible language!" cried Tryphena.

Louada Murilla gasped wordlessly, but the cap'n did not look at her.

"It ain't up to the language I'll use if you don't keep that forked tongue of yours still. You are my wife's cousins, and you're in trouble. If I'll hire a house for you in this place, will you go there and live by yourselves like you ought to?"

"That's hard-hearted of you to say that. Women ain't fit to live alone at our ages. We've found it out. They need to be in a house where there's a man at the head of things. We've made you a fair proposition about living here. There's no reason why we can't stay. We *shall* stay—or else we'll show you up to this town!"

The cap'n's wife looked for an explosion, and covered. But Cap'n Sproul had been doing some thinking. He knew that right was on his side, and that he could evict these squatters. But he also understood what the gossip of a country neighborhood was when fanned by women's tongues. He had decided upon craft instead of force; he had decided to get out of that dilemma without sacrificing his own peace of mind and his reputation as a decent citizen. He realized that when he dumped those women out of his house against their will, he would start every scurrilous tongue in town to clacking.

"Seeing that you have decided to hang on here in this new-chartered old maids' home," he proceeded, "you'll have to let me talk a little business. You have only been talking your own side of it so far. You say you need to live in a house where there's a man at the head of things. Well, then, I'll be at the head of things in this house. I'm to be boss of your business—you understand that. I ain't married to ary one of you, thank God! So it has got to be put in writing between you three and me that I am boss. I'm going to set right down to my desk and draw up a power-of-attorney dockment. You have got to sign it and appoint me manager of your business. And I'll guarantee to take charge of it."

"That's all we want," stated Tryphena complacently. "That's what we have said from the first. If we have a roof and plenty to eat and clothes, that's enough for lone women. We don't want any more burdens."

"Some women have to get married and be slaves to get what we're getting by this arrangement," stated Tryphosa, casting a triumphant look at her cousin, Louada Murilla.

"I'm up against as fine a graft game as ever bumped an innocent man," the cap'n muttered to himself, as he sat down at his desk, "but we'll wait and see who has the last giggle."

He wrought long and patiently with his pen, occasionally gazing at the ceiling like a lyric poet seeking inspiration. Indeed, Miss Lubelle did titter and suggest this idea to her sisters.

"No, marm, this ain't no pome," was the cap'n's dry response, as he prepared to read the paper aloud. "It's plain business, and I've given you the gist of it already. Now, you listen sharp, the three of you." He read it, waving his penstock at them to give emphasis. The writing gave him absolute control of all their affairs, and he was to use his best judgment and efforts in their behalf to make their life happy and full of comfort. As to what constituted comfort and happiness for lone and unprotected women, he was to be the judge—but he bound himself to feed them well and clothe them, so long as they chose to remain with him. He was to have the interest on the insurance money, this being the consideration in the case to make the agreement binding.

"I consider that a bargain worth making," whispered Tryphena to her smiling sisters. "He wants charge of our business, eh? Well, all the business we've got to tend to is to get enough to eat and clothes to wear, and he has got to furnish 'em. There's nothing like backing a man into a corner and shaking your finger under his nose in good and proper fashion."

"It's woman's sphere to be protected by men," said Tryphosa in reply, under cover of the cap'n's reading. "And there ain't any reason why Cousin Lou's husband shouldn't protect us, seeing that we're in the family. He's got money enough—and so has she."

In that mood they signed the paper, smiling, writing their names where the cap'n's stubby finger indicated.

"We are thankful and happy," they informed him in chorus.

"Glad to know it, marms. I only ask one thing—don't try to express

that happiness by singing me any more sea songs. It makes me uneasy, as you might say—makes me want to run away to sea again.

"If I can keep 'em from letting out them infernal howls when I'm setting down of an evening to have a little peace," he informed his wife, when the Poffitt sisters had retired upstairs to discuss their new good fortune, "I reckon I may be able to stand the rest of what is happening here."

"But, my good Lord, Aaron," wailed his wife, "you have gone to work and have got 'em plastered onto us forever now. I know them Poffitt girls better than you do. They'll never leave here!"

"Won't they?" inquired Cap'n Sproul, with an accent she could understand. "Then it will be because they won't either lead nor drive—and that means that I've got two reasons up my sleeve why I think they won't stay. It won't do you any good to ask questions now, Louada Murilla. Furthermore, I've got some more writing to tend to."

His wife knew him too well to catechize. She went about her duties, and he sat down at his desk and once more busied himself with composition. He tore up draft after draft of whatever it was he was striving to put into words, but at last he produced something that seemed to suit. He held it off and read it over to himself, growling in-dorsement. Then he made a copy in a fair hand, addressed an envelope, and sealed the writing within that covering.

The envelope was addressed to the Cuxabexis County *Herald*, the newspaper at the shire. He had inclosed a five-dollar bill with his communication, and had marked on the margin of the paper "Advertisement."

The publication day of the Cuxabexis County *Herald* was on a Thursday.

On Friday, Cap'n Aaron Sproul started a fire in the parlor stove, informing Louada Murilla curtly that he expected callers, and wanted a corner of the house to himself where he could transact business without having old maids walking over his feet. He began

to watch the road leading up from the village. By three o'clock in the afternoon, four elderly men had arrived at the Sproul house, and were seated in the parlor. These men arrived singly. The cap'n politely ushered each one into the house, took hat and overcoat away, and advised the caller to make himself comfortable. To one he gave the parlor stereoscope with a bunch of pictures, to another the family album, and the other two had books of poetry thrust into their hands.

The cap'n paced up and down the room with his hands behind his back.

"I know what you have come for, the business is perfectly straight, the advertising will be lived up to, but we won't talk that business, gents, until we have got the day's bunch of prospectives all together."

At four o'clock no one else had arrived, and the highway showed no one in sight.

"We'll now proceed to business, gents," Cap'n Sproul stated briskly.

He went out into the sitting room. He faced the three sisters, who straightened up and eyed his stern face with wonderment.

"As manager of your business, duly authorized by writings you have signed, and as boss of this house—being the man at the head of it—I shall have to ask you to step into the parlor, marms."

They obeyed promptly, for curiosity spurred them. He ushered them to a sofa, and they sat down stiffly in a row.

"I reckon one of you gents," began Cap'n Sproul, "has brought along a newspaper clipping relating to the business in hand."

One of the elderly men produced a slip of paper from a long wallet. The cap'n took it.

"I ask for the clipping from one of these men," Cap'n Sproul informed the sisters, "so that you can see that they have come answering an advertisement, all due and regular. I sent out that advertisement. I'll read it, and then both sides will understand the thing without any further talk." He cleared his throat and read:



He nodded cheerily at an irate face at each window.

"Widowers and baches take notice! At my house in Scotaze I have in stock a full line of spinsters, commonly called old maids, who have decided that for the rest of their lives they need a man at the head of the family. They are good cooks, are past the foolish age, and, being anxious for a home with a man at the head of it, will make good wives. Will be shown any afternoon to those who mean business; no trouble to show goods. Apply to AARON SPROUL."

For a moment after the reading of the notice, there was deathly silence. Then the three gaunt sisters arose as one person and shrieked in chorus. Tryphena found words first, and her voice rode above the clamor of the other two:

"You miserable, infernal, dirty old dog, you! You——"

Cap'n Sproul wagged his finger under her nose.

"Remember that you are spoiling

your chances, marm, if you go to spitting fire. These men are here to look at stock. No man wants a howlaferina for a wife."

"Do you think we are sheep, or calves, or hound dogs on sale?"

"Your business has been placed in my hands," insisted the cap'n. "Your own statement is that you need a man at the head of things. My best judgment is that you all three need to get married. All your affairs have been left to my best judgment by that writing you have signed. Now you shut up and stop spoiling any good trades that may be made. Shut up, I say!"

But the three women had become ter-

magants. They raved across the room toward the four elderly men, who blinked their alarm. They snapped derisive fingers under the noses of the elderly men. They applied names which scorched the souls of the applicants. Then they galloped out of the parlor, shrieking their resentment.

When there was silence at last in "the spinsters' stock room" of the Sproul mansion, the cap'n ventured to suggest that a little high spirit did not necessarily spoil a woman as a wife.

"I don't blame you for putting a polite name onto cussed ugliness, seeing that you're interested in 'em to some extent," retorted one of the elderly men. "But I've been married twice, and you can't fool me on a woman's disposition. For myself, I'd rather marry a coyote than one of them women you just teamed in here. I'll thank you for my hat and coat."

"I call that kind of advertising a fraud and cheat!" grumbled one of the other "customers." "I've spent good money for car fare to get up here, thinking I might find a good wife. And there ain't meat enough on any one of them three ham bones to satisfy a setter pup. If it wasn't for getting my name into the papers, I'd sue you for false pretenses."

The other two men indorsed these opinions in their own terms, and the four left the house in company.

Cap'n Sproul slammed the front door after them, and tramped into the sitting room. Even three infuriated women were cowed by his demeanor.

"You had your chance, and you threw it away," he stormed. "I spent time and effort and thought and good money to find your chance for you—and your devilish tongues and temper have sent four prospectives hipering off to spread news that you ain't up to standard. You're here dependent on me, my house, my money—and you've given me power of attorney in all your business—and that's a sweeping privilege. I'm going to use it. You don't belong in this house to make life miserable for me and my wife, and you ain't going to stay here, not if advertising brings results—and all business men say it does!"

"Do you mean——"

"I mean," roared the cap'n, his sea voice drowning out Tryphena's squeal, "that I'm going to keep that ad standing in that paper. I'll put that ad into other papers. I'll offer five hundred dollars, to boot, to be paid over with each of you. If single sale doesn't go, then I'll have an auction here on my premises and close out stock. I'm going to use that power of attorney to the limit."

"We'll never allow ourselves to be married off! We'll never endure such insults!"

"That ad stays in the papers, I tell you. And my address stays on the ad, and you'll have company arriving every day, marms. When Aaron Sproul goes into a thing—having full power of at-

torney and money to spend," he shouted, pounding his fist on the table, "he usually gets results, or else something has to crack. You can make up your minds to have a busy winter."

"We shan't stay here to be made the laughingstock of this whole county," raged Tryphena.

"Then you'll be leaving a good home on account of your own cursed notions. You'll be running away from a good chance of getting married. There'll be a lot of men come here to look stock over. Out of 'em all you'll most likely be able to pick some good husbands, if you'll learn to keep your tongues still. You acted like lunatics to-day."

"Do you mean—do you dare—are you going to keep this thing up?"

"It has only just begun," returned the cap'n serenely. "That was only the advance guard to-day. I reckon they'll begin to flock by to-morrow. Next week I shall begin to advertise inducements of a financial sort. Having full power of attorney, and knowing your hankering to have a man at the head of your affairs, I feel it is my duty to get you married off."

He started for the parlor.

"I'll draw up another ad, and you can look it over. I'm ready to listen to any reasonable suggestions."

Ten hours later, leaving so precipitately that they would not wait until morning, the Poffitt sisters were settled in furnished apartments in Scotaze village, and had a sign on the outer walls advertising their specialty: "Artistic Dressmaking."

Cap'n Sproul, on his way to the post office in the morning, saw the sign.

"Take a tough situation," he mused, "and there's nothing like having two ways out. They wouldn't lead worth a cent—but when it came to driving!" He smacked his lips.

Then he glanced up at the windows of the furnished rooms, and nodded cheerily at an irate face at each window—and flourished a cordial seaman's salute when Tryphena and Tryphosa and Lubelle shook their fists at him.

Beauty of Expression

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

IN its expressiveness, perhaps, lies the highest charm of the human face.

From the expressionless faces of the lower animals, the human face has gradually assumed its present degree of *perfection of form*; there has been a constant change and addition of *expressions* in connection with the evolution not of the race so much as of the physical and mental powers; thus the faces of the most advanced peoples are far more expressive than those of the lowest races, because the physical powers of the former are far more highly specialized than those of the latter, and we find that the *mental* powers keep pace with physiological development all along the line of progressive development.

The forehead, chin, and *defined* nose are the latest acquisitions to human physiognomy. None of the lower animals possess either, neither have they the same degree of reason, conscientiousness, and mechanical ability as the developed man, and the signs of these faculties are found in the forehead, chin, and nose.

A painting much famed for the inscrutability of its expression, and made doubly famous since its disappearance from the Louvre, is the "Mona Lisa," of Leonardo da Vinci. This renowned painting has taxed the ingenuity of artist and writer alike in their efforts at

analysis. There are those who declare that it typifies everything that is mysterious, complex, and fascinating in femininity; there are those bold enough to assert that Da Vinci, in an effort to bring out the intangibly alluring qualities of womanhood, overreached himself; that he did the painting over and over again, leaving it at last in its complicated and indeterminate state. As an expression of elusive evasiveness, it doubtless possesses some power, but the face lacks charm, the dominant note being satirical. From the standpoint of art it is valuable, but to the student of beauty it will be distinctly disappointing.

Some one has said that beauty lies only in the eye of the beholder, and this is largely true—although of course it does exist independently—for, were it otherwise, we should all admire the same type of face, whereas now we see beauty in a diversity of types, and, what is infinitely better, we see beauty where it really does not exist, but where something greater, higher, than any form of mere beauty reigns, and this is *expression*. When the countenance is illumined with strength of character, the most rugged features take on an attractiveness that is far more desirable than mere prettiness; that is why the expression of a face may atone for great irregularity of features; it is so

far superior that it may even prevent us from perceiving the defects of irregularity. This truth was nowhere borne out more forcibly than by the famous and brilliant women of the French courts. Take Madame de Sévigné, one of the handsomest women of Louis XIV.'s time, who could not have maintained the remarkable social and political influence she wielded, but for her charm of mind, heart, and manners. Her daughter, Madame de Grignan, although beautiful, had but indifferent success at court and elsewhere, and long before her death was thoroughly disliked for her cold, selfish nature.

The famous Madame de Staël, a woman of brilliancy, but no beauty, had a countenance so illuminated by intelligence, wit, and vivacity, that it shone with a transcendent beauty. Sismondi wrote of her: "To hear her, one would have said that she was the experience of many souls mingled in one. I looked and listened with transport. I discovered in her features a charm superior to beauty." Yet Madame de Staël was decidedly plain, if one judges by symmetry of features alone, and Madame de Sévigné had an ugly nose!

Contemporaneous with Madame de Staël is perhaps the most-admired and best-beloved woman of any era—Madame Récamier. Napoleon Bonaparte sought to attach her to his court, but she declined the honor. She was the most beautiful woman of her day, yet

her claim to immortality does not rest upon her beauty, but upon the gentleness and exquisite amiability of her character. The following tribute was paid her by a woman: "To be beloved was the history of Madame Récamier. Beloved by all in her youth for her astonishing beauty; beloved by all for her gentleness, her inexhaustible kindness, for the charm of her character, which was reflected in her sweet face; beloved

for the tender and sympathizing friendship which she awarded with an exquisite tact and discrimination of heart; beloved by old and young, small and great; by women, even women, so fastidious where other women are concerned; beloved always and by all from her cradle to the grave, such was the lot, such will be the renown, of this charming woman!"

What a monument! And who does not desire to emulate this adorable being in the beauty of her character? A beauty revealed



Madame Récamier—the most beautiful woman of her day.

in every expression, in every fiber of her being; a beauty that was enhanced with the passage of time, because it reflected the nobility of her soul. Yet there are many to-day who will deny to Madame Récamier the captivating qualities the accompanying illustration undoubtedly reveals. Why? Because our ideals have changed. We demand more than perfection of features and amiability. Fashions change in beauty as they do in everything else, and while there are modifications and revivals of fashions in dress and architecture and



The surroundings of the eye must express delicacy and purity of mind.

so forth, woman is steadily *progressing*; insipid femininity has long ago passed into limbo with the departed heroines of a former generation. The wishy-washy woman and the baby-faced girl are happily gone forever; those features that humanize us and lift us immeasurably above the lower races—i. e., the forehead, chin, and *defined* nose, are developing so rapidly in the woman of to-day that a new woman practically has evolved under our very eyes, as it were.

One well-known American artist says that chins are like ships, that "the feminine chin used to be like the receding bow of a schooner, whereas to-day it resembles the bow of a battleship—strong, defiant, protruding." So we could take up one feature after another, and amazement would grow deeper each minute at the wonderful power and character expressed in the female face of to-day as compared to yester years. Our women of to-day are so complex that we can have no standard of mere beauty. We Americans are a composite race, and our women are the most beautiful in the world, because in

them is commingled the best and sturdiest qualities of the advance guard of civilization, so to speak. Therefore, we have many types of female loveliness, and no woman need despair that she lacks this, that, or the other featural perfection. She should, on the contrary, concern herself with ascertaining what particular type she most closely resembles, and cultivate that. No face is hopeless; true, its architecture may even be badly in need of a surgeon's interference, yet true beauty lies deeper than the bone; it lies in spiritual *expression*; therefore, every woman is in reality the architect of her own features. Is it not so?

The eyes are called the windows of the soul, which is true to a certain extent only; they can be controlled, partially veiled, or their expressions altogether hidden. Not so with the mouth; this feature is the truest index of character and temperament, and a student of physiognomy never errs in estimating one's nature from it alone. Pa-



One's expression should be studied before the mirror.

tient, petulant, weak, serious, frivolous, affectionate, callous, kind, cruel, self-reliant, or dependable—all these characteristics, and more, are revealed by the mouth. Note the difference in expression of the mouths of a sweet-tempered, hopeful woman, and one who is self-willed and faultfinding; one is gentle and happy, with shapely lips upturned at the corners, the other's mouth is habitually set in a thin, grim line.

Poorly kept teeth and disfiguring

habits spoil many pretty mouths.

Nervousness is sometimes at the root of the latter evil. It is a good plan to study one's expression in the mirror. Many women are so ignorant of their own real natures, that self-observation of this kind will be a revelation to them. It will be found that the lips are drawn into very unlovely lines expressive of many emotions. Grimacing is an insult to one's features, and every woman will at once acknowledge this,

and strive to *erase the effect*. It will not be easy to do at first, but conscious effort will in time eradicate *habits of thought*, and with them undesirable expressions will vanish. Lips must match the color of the gums, otherwise the contrast is unsightly. Pale lips are unhealthy, and indicate anæmia; blue lips point to a weak circulation. Where these conditions exist, the blood tonic so frequently referred to in these papers should be taken.

It is a signal mistake to rouge the lips, except upon state occasions, as, besides being in poor taste, the con-

tinual use of rouge is harmful. Perfumed almond or olive oil rubbed into the lips several times daily, especially before going into the cold, and on retiring, will do much to improve them. Dry, pale, and thin lips are unattractive, whereas full, red, and slightly moist lips are in themselves a recognized mark of beauty, and when they habitually wear a winning expression, transform the plainest face into a prepossessing one.



Studiously avoid a blank stare.

Beautiful eyes are frequently spoiled by affectations of expressions assumed under the belief that they are becoming or attractive. Thus a cold stare does not convey the impression intended. It deceives no one, and merely invites unpleasant criticism. A frozen expression with elevated eyebrows, indicative of disdainful hauteur, never was the distinguishing feature of a grand lady, except in story-books. This expression springs from cold selfish-

ness and all uncharitableness, and, in place of being cultivated, should be studiously avoided.

That the eyebrows are wonderfully expressive, and add or detract greatly to any face, is an undoubted fact; also they are perhaps the most neglected features of the human countenance. Many women never bestow upon them a single thought. Although delicately arched brows are generally regarded as the most attractive, they do not blend with every type; a desire for expressive beauty in this respect will soon acquaint one with the shape of brow that reveals

the greatest power of expression to one's individual "style," and by training the brows carefully day by day, an almost miraculous change can be wrought. The *surroundings* of the eye—that is, the lids and muscles of the upper cheek and temples—possess powerfully the movements adapted to the *expression* of emotion, and if various emotions are often exercised, they never fail to leave their imprint behind. Thus love, sensuality, mirth, anger, parsimony, gluttony, and secretiveness, all alike leave traces about the eye that are easily recognized. The fine lines indicative of humor and sympathetic kindness give an expression to the face that is very attractive.

An expression *through the eyes*, as it is frequently called, indicative of purity of thought, is conceded by all men as the most beautiful feature in the female face. If the eyes are clear and tender, much can be done with their surroundings to convey this impression.

The eyelids must be free from all blemishes and discolorations, must possess, in fact, the delicacy of youth; sallowness and sagging lines must be eradicated with bleaching creams and careful massage; bags under the eyes will spoil the most expressive face. All these conditions must be eliminated with daily care and attention to infinite detail, so that there is imparted to the skin surrounding the eye a clear, firm delicacy expressive of youth and an *unsullied mind*. The "Sistine Madonna," undoubtedly inspired, and one of the most wonderful paintings ever executed, is an exquisite illustration of just what is meant in this connection.

Apropos of lotions and the like for the removal of sallowness, lines, and sagging tissues, there is a secret French formula, famed by court beauties for its power to freshen the skin and remove wrinkles, which will gladly be furnished to the readers of this magazine on application.

Answers to Correspondents

MRS. O. M. S.—There is nothing that will restore bleached hair to its natural color except time and daily, careful grooming of the scalp and hair with oils, a tonic containing oil, and vigorous brushing morning and night. Oil removes that dry, tawny appearance of bleached hair and gives it a more lifelike, natural look. It can be applied in the form of brilliantine—which is simply perfumed castor oil—or as plain olive oil; the latter is not so heavy as castor oil, and therefore preferable. Place a few drops on a clean hair brush and stroke it vigorously upon the hair from scalp to ends. Shampoo with a cream or a soap containing tar, and apply the following tonic:

Tincture of cantharides.....	1 ounce
Spirit of rosemary.....	1 ounce
Bay rum.....	8 ounces
Olive oil.....	½ ounce

Rub into the scalp for ten minutes night and morning.

JERUSALEM.—Featural defects can scarcely be entered into through the correspondence column. On some future occasion, I will take up the subject and devote an article to it. The need for good, sound advice and treatment has been recognized, and in England, at least, physicians, or rather surgeons,

are turning their attention to this line of work. It is a virgin field in legitimate practice and full of promise.

ANXIOUS MOTHER.—I urgently advise that you take your little girl to a reputable physician. Her stunted growth and undeveloped mind point to a condition of the thyroid gland, and under treatment a magical change may be affected. Wonders have been and are being accomplished since the function of the thyroid gland has become better known.

JENNIE.—Yes, the beauties of the French court were past masters in the art of preserving those charms which are so alluringly attractive in women. They have left us many fine formulas, and I will gladly send you one to restore the freshness of your skin, upon receipt of a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

DICK.—The following is Doctor Shoemaker's bunion cure:

Carbolic acid.
Tincture of iodine.
Glycerin—of each ½ ounce.

Paint on with camel's hair brush night and morning. This relieves the pain and reduces the swelling, but will not remove the deformity if any exists.

Doctor Whitney will be glad to answer, free of charge, all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health. Private replies will be sent to those inclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Do not send Canadian stamps or coins. Address: Beauty Department, SMITH'S MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York.

DEEP BREATHING.

By D. O. Harrell, M. D.

I BELIEVE we must all admit that deep breathing is a very desirable practice. Furthermore, we know it to be a fact that not one person in twenty, or perhaps one person in a hundred, really breathes deeply. Every physician can verify the statement that we are daily called upon to prescribe drugs for ailments that owe their cause directly to insufficient and improper breathing.—Oxygen Starvation.

Breathing is the Vital Force of Life. Every muscle, nerve cell, in fact every fibre of our body, is directly dependent upon the air we breathe. Health, Strength and Endurance are impossible without well oxygenated blood. The food we eat must combine with abundant oxygen before it can become of any value to the body. Breathing is to the body what free draught is to the steam boiler. Shut off the draught, and you will kill your fire, no matter how excellent coal you use. Similarly, if you breathe shallowly, you must become anaemic, weak and thin, no matter how carefully you may select your diet.

I might continue indefinitely to cite examples of the great physiological value of deep breathing. For instance, it is a well-known fact that intense mental concentration and nerve strain paralyzes the diaphragm, the great breathing muscle. This depressing condition can be entirely counteracted through conscious deep breathing.

The main benefit of physical exercise lies in the activity it gives the lungs. What we term "lack of healthful exercise," in reality means insufficient lung exercise. Since few persons have the strength and endurance to exercise violently enough to stir the lungs into rapid action, common sense dictates that the lungs should be exercised independently, through conscious breathing. Exercise that fails to excite vigorous lung action is of little real value.

Unfortunately, few persons have the slightest conception of what is really meant by deep breathing. In fact, few physicians

thoroughly understand the act. Ask a dozen different physical instructors to define deep breathing, and you will receive a dozen different answers. One tells you it means the full expansion of the chest, another tells you it means abdominal breathing, the third declares it means diaphragmatic breathing, and so on. In the end, one becomes thoroughly confused, and justly forms the opinion that most teachers of physical culture are incompetent to teach deep breathing.

Recently there has been brought to my notice a brochure on this important subject of respiration, that to my knowledge for the first time really treats the subject in a thoroughly scientific and practical manner. I refer to the booklet entitled, "Deep Breathing," by Paul Von Boeckmann, R. S., 107 Park Ave., New York. In this treatise, the author describes proper breathing, so that even the most uninformed layman can get a correct idea of the act. The booklet contains a mass of common sense teachings on the subject of Deep Breathing, Exercise and Body Building. The author has had the courage to think for himself, and to expose the weaknesses in our modern systems of physical culture.

I believe this booklet gives us the real key to constitutional strength. It shows us plainly the danger of excessive exercise, that is, the danger of developing the external body at the expense of the internal body. The author's arguments are so logical it is self-evident that his theories must be based upon vast experience. Personally, I know that his teachings are most profoundly scientific and thoroughly practical, for I have had occasion to see them tested in a number of my patients.

The booklet to which I refer can be had from the author directly upon payment of 10 cents in coin or stamps. The simple exercises he describes therein are in themselves well worth ten times the small price demanded.

Our Birthday Number!

☛ With the February number Ainslee's celebrates its fifteenth birthday. We have tried to get together an issue of "the magazine that entertains" which will make all who see it wish us, for their own sakes as well as for ours, many happy returns of the day.

☛ For the opening long story we have secured a new novel by the author of "The Visits of Elizabeth," "His Hour," "Three Weeks," etc.,

ELINOR GLYN

☛ Among the shorter features that lend charm, sparkle and distinction to this birthday number of ours you will find

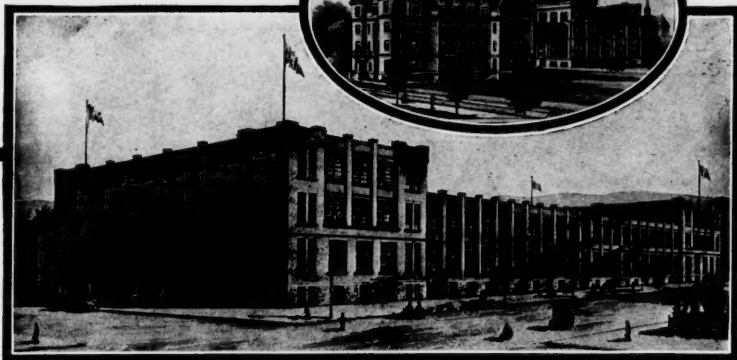
Seven Fridays	Marie Van Vorst
The Yellow Diamond Pendant	May Futrelle
The Shanghaied Cherub	Joseph Ernest
Radiant Lady	Nina Wilcox Putnam
The Woman With a Past	Anna Alice Chapin
Tarquin's Clock Strikes Twelve	Thomas P. Byron
Treasure of the Heart	Marie Conway Oemler
The Clown and the Clergyman	Thomas Addison
Sub Rosa	Horace Fish
The Child	Constance Skinner
The Mystery of Charm	Edgar Saltus
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The February Ainslee's

On sale January 15th

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The great masses of sufferers from eye strain and other curable optic disorders have been misled by those who were making fortunes out of eyeglasses and spectacles.

Get Rid of Your Glasses

Dr. John L. Corish, an able New York physician of long experience, has come forward with the edict that eyeglasses must go. Intelligent people everywhere are endorsing him. The Doctor says that the ancients never disfigured their facial beauty with goggles. They employed certain methods which have recently been brought to the light of modern science. Dr. Corish has written a marvelous book entitled, "How to Save the Eyes," which tells how they may be benefited, in many cases, instantly. There is an easy home treatment which is just as simple as it is effective, and it is fully explained in this wonderful book, which will be sent free to any one. A postal card will bring it to your very door. This book tells you why eyeglasses are needless and how they may be put aside forever. When you have taken advantage of this information obtained in this book you may be able to throw your glasses away and should possess healthy, beautiful, soulfully expressive, magnetic eyes that indicate the true character and win confidence.

Bad Eyes Bring Bad Health

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maintains his store at considerable expense. He must pay for help, rent and lighting. He carries many articles that you would never dream of ordering direct from manufacturers, and is, therefore, of great service when you need a newspaper, a cigar or a box of stationery. Then why not give him all of your custom and so help make his business profitable?

Tell him to show you samples of AINSLEE'S, POPULAR, SMITH'S, PEOPLE'S, NEW STORY and TOP-NOTCH magazines. Select those you want and he will gladly deliver them to your residence regularly.

Then, when you want something good to read, you will not have to search for it.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, New York



This Is a Janet Jones Hand-Made Baby Mocassin

They are made of strong, yet soft white Lambkin. They are made all by hand and are embroidered by hand. Daintily lined with Silkene.

They are the prettiest, coolest, most practical things for Baby's feet you have ever seen, and they really wear.

We want to send you a

Trial Pair for 50 Cents

Just send us the size or length of Baby's foot and tell us the color you want—white embroidered with Blue or Pink, or solid White, Pink, Blue, or Tan.

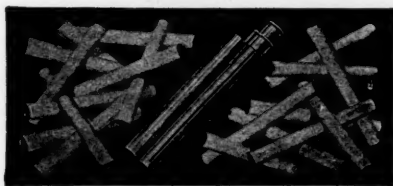
Send 50 cents in stamps, and you will be just as delighted as the thousands who are now using them.

Perhaps you now want shoes or slippers for Baby.

Janet Jones Soft Sole Baby Shoes or Slippers



are beautifully made in all colors. The Burton Shoes are of soft Lambkin, any color, and in Velvet, black or brown. Beautifully lined. Pearl buttons and silk tassels. The slippers of same colors and in Patent Leather, with silk rosettes. **Send us 50 cents, the size of Baby's foot, and say which kind you want. Address Janet Jones Baby Shoes, Rochester, New York**



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A Practical Novelty for Cigarette Smokers

TURKO CIGARETTE ROLLER

Sent postpaid for **25cts.** Address,
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Built like Government Torpedo Boats, of tough, puncture-proof galvanized steel plates, pressed to rigid form and so securely joined together that a leak is impossible. The Mullins Steel Boats are guaranteed against punctures, leaking, waterlogging, warping, drying out, opening seams, and NEVER REQUIRE CAULKING.

MOTORS: The Lowen-Victor 4-Cycle and Ferro 2-Cycle. Light, powerful, simple, can be operated by the beginner, start like automobile's motor, one man control, never stall at any speed, exhaust silently under water. We also manufacture a complete line of steel hunting and fishing boats, row boats, oar canvas-covered canoes.

Our beautiful book, illustrated in colors, is free.

THE W. H. MULLINS CO., World's Largest Boat Builders, 325 Franklin Street, Salem, Ohio



Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements.

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AGENTS WANTED in every county to sell the **Transparent Handle Pocket Knife**. Big commission paid. From \$75 to \$300 a month can be made. Write for terms. **Novelty Cutlery Co.**, No. 15 Bar St., Canton, Ohio.

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LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE wanted. Splendid income assured right man to act as our representative after learning our business thoroughly by mail. Former experience unnecessary. All we require is honesty, ability, ambition and willingness to learn a lucrative business. No soliciting or traveling. This is an exceptional opportunity for a man in your section to get into a big paying business without capital and become independent for life. Write at once for full particulars. **E. R. Marden Pres., The Nat'l. Co-Op. Real Estate Co.**, L 335 Marden Bldg., Washington, D. C.

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"BILLY" made a fortune for us. We can make big money for you. Send us your Poems, Songs, or Melodies. **Kendalls & Paley**, 1367 Broadway, N. Y.

Music—Continued.

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INVEST in 6%, \$100 Conrad City, Montana, Water Bonds. Recommended by bankers. Send for particulars. **L. N. Rosenbaum**, Municipal and Corp. Bonds, Haight Bldg., Seattle, Wash.



A Knife Never Ends a Corn

Paring a corn takes off just the top layer. Then it grows, and you pare again.

Month after month one goes on putting with the same old corn. And there is always the risk of infection.

The right way—the scientific way—is to stick on a Blue-jay plaster. From that instant all pain is stopped.

Then the B & B wax in the heart of this

plaster gently undermines the corn. In two days the corn comes out.

That finishes that corn.

A new corn may come if you pinch the toe, but the old one is ended forever.

Sixty million corns have been ended in that way since Blue-jay was invented.



A in the picture is the soft B & B wax. It loosens the corn.
B protects the corn, stopping the pain at once.
C wraps around the toe. It is narrowed to be comfortable.
D is rubber adhesive to fasten the plaster on.

Blue-jay Corn Plasters

Sold by Druggists—15c and 25c per package

Sample Mailed Free. Also Blue-jay Bunion Plasters.

Bauer & Black, Chicago and New York, Makers of Surgical Dressings, etc.

(232)

Motion Picture Plays

WRITE IDEAS for moving picture plays. Make \$50 weekly in spare time. No experience or literary excellence necessary. Easy, fascinating work. We'll show you how. National Authors Institute, 412 Gaiety Theatre Bldg., New York.

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FREE—INVESTING FOR PROFIT MAGAZINE. Send me your name and I will mail you this magazine absolutely free. Before you invest a dollar anywhere—get this magazine—it is worth \$10 a copy to any man who intends to invest \$5 or more per month. Tells you how \$1,000 can grow to \$22,000—how to judge different classes of investments, the Real Earning Power of your money. This magazine six months free if you write today. H. L. Barber, Publisher, 408, 20 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago.

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BUILD a \$5000 Business in Two Years. Let us start you in the collection business. No capital needed; big field. We teach secrets of collecting money; refer business to you. Write today for Free Pointers and new plan. American Collection Service, 19 State Street, Detroit, Mich.

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THE LATEST PICTURE HITS. "My Champagne Girlie" and "La Belle Danseuse." 15c each or the Two complete with 100 other "Catchy" Art Ideas for only 25c. Union Art Co., 585 Garfield Ave., Jersey City, N. J.

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GREIDER'S Illustrated Catalogue of Prize Poultry for 1913 describes incubators, brooders; gives low prices on all stock and eggs. How to make hens lay. 10 cents. B. H. Greider, Box 87, Rheems, Pa.

THE MANDY LEE INCUBATOR is more completely automatic than any other. Everything measured and regulated; heat, moisture, ventilation. Simply follow new rules. New features for 1913. Fine book free. Geo. H. Lee Co., 1266 Harney St., Omaha, Neb.

Coins, Stamps, Etc.

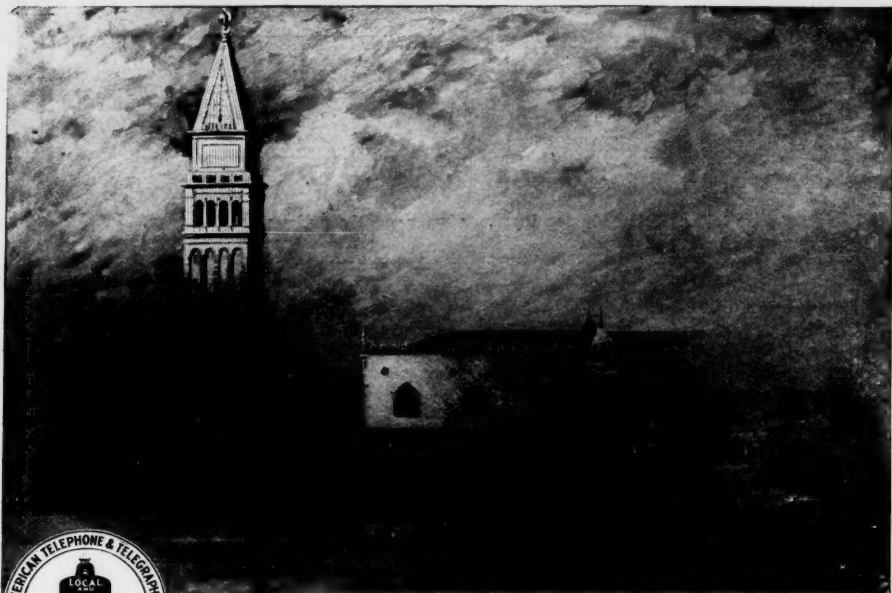
5 FRENCH Colonial Stamps 2c, 1000 Diff. Foreign Stamps \$1.75, 10 Diff. Foreign Coins 25c, 25 Beautiful Embossed Post Cards 10c, Buying List Coins 10c, Sample "Stamp & Coin Collector" free. A. H. Kraus, 409 A Chestnut St., Milwaukee, Wis.

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PLAYS, Vaudeville Sketches, Monologues, Dialogues, Speakers, Minstrel Material, Jokes, Recitations, Tableaux, Drills, Entertainments. Make Up Goods. Large Catalog Free. T. S. Denison & Co., Dept. 18, Chicago

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A REMARKABLE OFFER OF Henderson's Seeds: Ponderosa Tomato, Scarlet Globe Radish, Big Boston Lettuce, Invincible Asters, Butterfly Fancies, Spencer Sweet Peas. On receipt of 10c. to cover postage, etc. we will mail our Henderson collection consisting of one packet of each of above varieties all enclosed in a coupon envelope, which will be accepted as 25c. on any order of \$1.00 or over. In addition we will mail our 1913 catalogue "Everything for the Garden," the biggest and best we have ever issued. Peter Henderson & Company, 35 & 37 Cortlandt St., New York City.



Seven Million Watch-Towers in the Bell System

The original campanili were the watch-towers of old Venice, guarding the little republic from invasion by hostile fleets.

Later, bells were mounted in these same towers to give warning of attack and celebrate victories.

Judged by modern telephone standards, such a system of communication seems crude and inadequate.

In the civilization of to-day, a more perfect intercommunication is

essential to national safety, convenience and progress.

The Bell System binds together a nation of nearly one hundred million people, by "highways of speech" extending into every nook and corner of this great country.

Seven million Bell telephone stations are the watch-towers which exchange, daily, twenty-five million messages for the happiness, prosperity and progress of all the people.

**AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY
AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES**

One Policy

One System

Universal Service

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements.



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A NEW DISCOVERY WITH ALMOST MIRACULOUS POWERS FOR THE HEALING OF INFLAMED AND SUPPURATING SORES OF THE SKIN.

Severe Burns, Boils, Carbuncles, Ringworm, Eczemas, yield almost instantly to this wonderful application.

Produces healing in one-half the time of other remedies.

Thermozone can be painted on the skin at a temperature of 200 degrees without injuring the skin.

This high degree of heat makes this application in a class by itself in treating cases where heat applications are required.

It is the only application that can be painted on the skin above 140 degrees, at which point germ life dies.

Thermozone is a perfect dressing for an open wound because it destroys infection and makes an airtight covering that prevents the wound from injury while it stimulates the healing process.

A new hope for those suffering from chronic sores.

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CAN, WITH ACCESSORIES**

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98 Beekman Street, New York City

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BLEND
CIGARETTES

A Good Smoke for a Good Fellow! This exquisitely balanced Turkish-blend cigarette has enjoyable qualities all its own.

Never before has popularity in a cigarette, been so spontaneously shown as in the country-wide demand to-day for these delightful FATIMA Cigarettes.

With each package of Fatima you get a pennant coupon, 25 of which secure a handsome felt pennant—Colleges, Universities and Fraternal Orders (12x32)—selection of 115.

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